

# COLLEGE ENGLISH

Freshman English During the Flood

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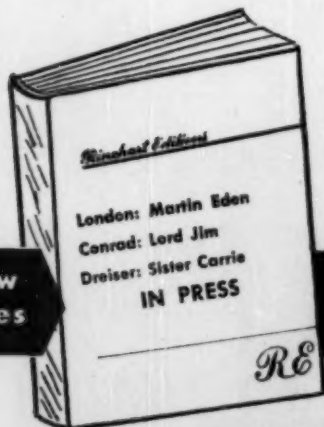
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ENGLISH COLLEGE

Note: "For Contributors" appears opposite page 178.

## For Readers

**CHARLTON LAIRD**, a professor at Nevada and a well-known philologist, describes "what may well become the Oregon Plan" of teaching diluvian Freshman English. With degrees from Iowa and Columbia, Laird has taught chiefly at Idaho and Nevada. He has published four books, many articles, and two historical novels. **ROBERT ORNSTEIN**, who treats *Gatsby* from the point of view of the romantic dream, is the author of Renaissance articles in *ELH*, *SP*, and *JEGP*. He is an instructor at Connecticut who took his Ph.D. at Wisconsin and taught at Oberlin. **WAYNE BURNS**, with degrees from, and teaching at, Miami, Harvard, and Cornell, is an associate professor at U. Washington. He has published a half-dozen articles and has a book ready on Charles Reade. **CHARLES KAPLAN**, who contributes the TV parodies, is Chairman at Los Angeles State, where he went from Roosevelt, after studying at Chicago and Northwestern. He has published in *CE*, *AL*, *HLB*, *NMQ*, and (a story) in the *Antioch Review*. **ELIAS SCHWARTZ** ("Detachment and Tragic Effect"), who has an article on Chapman forthcoming in *JEGP*, went to NYU, Chicago, and Stanford for his degrees, taught briefly at Nebraska, and is now an instructor at Notre Dame. **ARTHUR S. HARRIS, JR.**, who contributes the critical profile of teacher-novelist Gerald Warner Brace, has published articles in *JHE*, *Antioch Review*, and *Atlantic*. He has been at Harvard and BU, and has taught at New Hampshire and in preparatory school; he now directs a radio-TV station. **ELIZABETH V. WRIGHT's** useful checklist for short story explications comes to the Round Table from the Chicago division of the University of Illinois, where Miss Wright is an assistant professor. She is a staff member of *Poetry* magazine. The suggestions on teaching reading by **JAMES I. BROWN** come from the St. Paul division of the University of Minnesota. Brown, a professor of rhetoric, has published a text and articles on read-

ing and listening. **ROSSELL HOPE ROB-BINS**, who discusses "Transferred Techniques for Non-Majors," is probably best known for his attack, *The T. S. Eliot Myth* (1952). But his special field is Middle English language and literature—he is an editor of *The Index of Middle English Verse* and of *Secular Lyrics of the XIV and XV Centuries*—and he has published seventy articles, on subjects from "The Poems of Humfrey Newton" (*PMLA*) to "The Basis of Bop" (*Harlem Quarterly*). Robbins was a student at Liverpool, Cambridge, and the Matthay School of Music, and has taught at Cambridge and Brooklyn Polytechnic. He is now a Guggenheim Fellow. **WILLIAM D. BAKER**, assistant professor of Communication Skills at Michigan State, urges teachers to use the *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*; last October he urged teachers not to red-pencil theme-papers so much. He has published four books on composition. **PHILIP APPLEMAN**, instructor at Indiana, with B.S. and Ph.D. from Northwestern, writes up Shelby Foote's modern analogue of Chaucer. He has published poems in various little magazines, and has an article on Lawrence forthcoming. **LORRAINE K. LIVINGSTON** ("An Experiment in Correction and Revision") is an instructor at Minnesota Extension Division. She has been associated with the University almost consecutively since her undergraduate days. **JOHN S. KENYON**, who contributes the detailed answer in the Current English Forum, is a professor emeritus at Hiram. With graduate degrees from Chicago and Harvard, he taught at Butler for ten years before Hiram. A well-known scholar of the language and especially phonetics, he is the author of *American Pronunciation* (1924, fifth printing 1956) and *A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English* (1944, sixth printing 1953), as well as fifty articles on language and Shakespeare. **WILLIAM STAFFORD**, the second poet of the issue, is an assistant professor at San Jose State, with degrees from Kansas and Iowa.

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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

Volume 18

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## Freshman English During the Flood

CHARLTON LAIRD

IN THIS, my experience can scarcely be unusual, that at every extramural meeting I have attended during the past year, whether of teachers of English or executives, sooner or later one question has always arisen: Where are the teachers to come from? Those who direct freshman English, measuring the run-off from the post-depression and World War II baby deluge, and observing the limited sandbagging facilities provided by the post-depression Ph.D.'s, see little but mounting enrollments and sagging standards. And this they anticipate even if budgets can be built up to obtain—in the lively brain-trade booming with automation—a reasonable proportion of the trained minds likely to be available.

This quandary in academe was brought sharply to my attention when I recently spent a year as visiting professor at the University of Oregon. The president, Dr. O. Meredith Wilson, wanted experiments run while there was still time. Did I have any ideas? I suggested two lines of approach. First, students can learn with much less instruction than they are offered, if they want to. Second, I suggested that highly skilled teachers might be reserved for highly skilled purposes; many a good teacher spends an unconscionable portion of his life correcting spelling and punctuation, surely an activity requiring little of either acumen or learning. With this much by way of theory we proceeded to means and methods, with Philip W.

Souers, Head of the Department, supplying ideas for both.

When a new term started last January I found myself with what purported to be an average section of twenty-six second-term freshmen and permission to try anything that appeared interesting. By the end of the term we were convinced we had found something, and I knew I had taught the only section of freshman composition in which I had been able to take more than a superficial interest since I was too young to know how little I was accomplishing. For the spring term the experiment was expanded to five sections, varied to substitute a large lecture for section meetings, and several volunteer experiments had sprung up to test minor variations. An application to the Ford Foundation produced a grant to enlarge the experiment further in the coming year and to set up adequate machinery to test results. At this writing a committee is planning procedures to run through the coming year, utilizing several variations upon the central idea in the approach, involving a score of sections which will be subject to a variety of tests, and making use of the entire freshman class in one way or another.

This is not the place nor is it yet the time to attempt any elaborate description of what may well become the Oregon Plan. Presumably that will be done in a year or two, when the reports are in from the experiment now being plotted under the di-

rection of Professor John C. Sherwood, director of composition. This statement is intended only as a sketch of the method, with the thought that teachers in other institutions may wish to try it. Perhaps a description of the procedure as it developed in the trial section last winter will provide a sufficient pattern.

We started by asking ourselves what a section of freshman English costs in time. On the theory that a teacher with four sections of about twenty-five has a teaching load of at least forty-four hours a week, we assumed that teaching a section requires eleven hours, which we guessed might be spent about as follows: classes, three hours; correcting a set of papers, five hours; conferences, one hour; preparations, committees, staff meetings and the like, two hours. I determined to try to teach the section in a maximum of seven hours, budgeting my time about as follows: class, one hour; preparation, keeping class records, attending staff meetings, etc., one hour; reading papers and meeting individual students, two hours; group conferences (three students per conference, three conferences per hour), three hours. (For the peace of mind of taxpayers to whom this statement may come, let me add that I devoted more than the remaining four hours of the state's time to preparing reports of the experiment!) We assumed that if I could teach the class in seven or eight hours without worse results than I should have expected from eleven hours, we could theoretically increase an instructor's load twenty-five to thirty percent without either him or his class suffering appreciably.

My procedure was as follows. I told the class we would meet on Monday, but not as a class on Wednesday and Friday. Instead, they were to arrange themselves in groups of three (I later expanded this to four in most conference groups) to meet with me in conferences of fifteen minutes each, that is, in three sessions an hour with a little time for slack. I assigned a

theme, which they were to bring with them to the conference.

At the conferences I explained the next step. The students were to correct one another's papers. Before the Friday class hour, each student was to read the paper he had received, suggest revisions by using the correction symbols in the handbook for the course, and write a considered statement of what was good and what inadequate in the paper. At the class hour on Friday, the group was to convene in the regular classroom, or anywhere else that was convenient for them, and exchange papers again. Once more the students were to read the papers and recommend revisions, checking those suggested by the first critic, and adding any of their own, along with a written appraisal. Then each paper was to be returned to its author, and the students were to discuss the papers, endeavoring to clarify one another's criticisms. After this meeting the writer of the paper was to compose an estimate of the comments he had received, revise the paper in any way that now seemed fitting, and hand it to me in class the following Monday.

At that Monday meeting I assigned another theme, and prepared the students for the second round of writing and criticism by introducing a central subject for the week's study—relevance, significance, unity, or whatever. With the students embarked on their second paper, I prepared for my conference on the first set of papers, which I had just received. I wrote each student's name on a blank sheet of paper, clipped the sheets together in accordance with the conference groups, and used these sheets to keep a skeleton record of all the student's activities, in the theme and later in the conference. I read the set of themes rapidly, observing the comments made by the various critics, and especially the writer's rejoinder, noticed whether the revisions had been generally adequate, and took a few notes to refresh my memory. At the conference on Thursday I consid-



ered the three papers orally, reviewing the criticisms of the students and adding observations of my own. I resolved any differences of opinion, asked questions calculated to elicit specific evidence, and directed the comment toward the subject for the week, while seeing to it that each student was drawn into the discussion. For instance, I might say to A that I agreed that his critics had been right in their observations about this lack of unity, and I noticed that he had graciously accepted their animadversions, but I was curious to know what he would do another time to take advantage of these criticisms. In B's paper, both critics had objected to its being unclear, and in this they were probably right, but I doubted that they had found the best solution; I suspected that his topic sentences were at fault, and gave him examples. Each student received some comment on his paper and on his criticism

of the other papers. Meanwhile, I completed the records I had started when I had read the paper, making jottings as we talked, including a grade for the theme, an observation on the student as a critic, his participation in the discussion, or anything that might be useful.

Since Monday the students had written their set of themes for that week. They exchanged them, received any special instructions pertinent to the revisions, and were dismissed. While they were being replaced by a second conference group, I filed their themes, laid out my new batch of corrected themes and record sheets, and was ready for my second conference. Now, this method of handling a section is simple and orderly enough, but since it involved simultaneous sequences for student and instructor, a skeletonized statement may be useful:

	<i>Student</i>	<i>Instructor</i>
Class meeting	Receives assignments, instructions, etc.	Assigns work for the week; collects theme from previous week.
Interim	Writes a theme.	Prepares for conference; reads themes from previous week; makes preliminary notes.
Conference	Exchanges week's theme with another student; receives instructions for criticizing; participates in conference.	Leads discussion of themes from previous week; completes records and files themes; gives instructions for reading current themes.
Interim	Reads and criticizes paper he has received.	Plays golf.
Student group meeting	Exchanges paper; reads second paper; receives own paper and participates in discussion of all papers.	Plays golf.
Interim	Writes estimate of criticisms he has received; revises theme.	Plays golf.
Class meeting	Returns corrected paper; receives instructions for the week.	Assigns work for the week; collects revised themes from previous week.

This process went on; each week a theme was written, criticized, revised, discussed, and filed by Thursday of the next week, by which time another theme was written and started on its cycle. In the one class meeting a week there remained some time for consideration of rhetorical principles, some *explications de texte*, but not much. At first, all of us were a bit confused, but after a few weeks the system was working smoothly. The students had learned to scrutinize writing, other people's writing and eventually their own, as they had never scrutinized any writing before. I was discovering that my job was no longer mainly criticizing students' work but showing students how to criticize one another's and their own work.

This procedure has obvious advantages, but we found some, also, which were not so obvious. The instructor saved time, as we had hoped he would. Since most of the commoner inelegances had been caught by one or another of the student critics, the instructor did not need to spend much time on routine correction. Deliberately, I cut the time for reading a set of papers to an hour, and found that I could acquire a passing notion of them in that time; when I increased the time to two hours it was quite adequate. We had predicted something of the sort, and we had predicted, also, some improvement in student attitude, but we were amazed at the improvement we observed. The whole level of the class rose, and the better students became downright enthusiastic. I would receive reports of how they met and argued about their papers by the hour, and about the form and adequacy as well as the content. Both the mechanics and the rhetoric improved. As one young man put it, "When you've said that something the other fellow has done is lousy, you better be careful not to do it yourself." No longer did students glance at the grade on a theme, make a few revisions which might or might not be improvements, return the paper, and forget the whole bothersome business. One student explained the difference in this

way: "If the teacher marks something wrong on your paper, you think probably he knows, and you don't do much about it. But if a student marks your paper, you think maybe he's wrong and you can catch him at it, so you look it up." Another said that in trying to prove he was right he had learned a lot of rules he didn't know were in the book; checking his themes the previous term revealed that these statements had been called repeatedly to his supposed attention.

Numerous side advantages appeared. There were few late papers, usually only for illness. Plagiarism vanished. He would be a foolhardy student who would submit work not his own, knowing it was to receive the scrutiny and discussion for which it was destined, and I found that the students were much more rigorous in rebuking tendencies toward shady practice than I would have been—or at least enough of them were—partly because they had surer grounds for their suspicions. Tension between teacher and student lessened; the student now felt he knew the teacher as a human being, and the teacher was no longer his severest critic. The student found, on the whole, that his contemporaries did not much admire his prose, but that the teacher could usually find at least something good in it, or at worst would show him how to improve it. The written comments by the student critics, intended to force the student to decide what he wanted to say, provided the teacher with material he had wanted but did not usually get—samples of the student's writing which were not fixed up because they were "themes." When the student who had triumphantly caught his colleague misspelling *too* had then misspelled the same word twice in his own critical comment, he was prepared to take seriously the instructor's suggestion that he should watch all his writing more carefully.

The procedure works, I believe, because the student receives less instruction in *writing* but more help in *learning to write*, and because he is in better state to learn.



He spends relatively little time in classes where a few students are trying to show off, a few others are trying to keep from being called on, and a good many are a little drowsy and greatly bored. Nobody can gaze dreamily out the window during a conference group, not if the instructor does his job. Furthermore, each student is personally concerned, and can be made to feel personally concerned, with every paper taken up in the conference group. Either he has written it, or he has criticized it, and he is personally responsible for any ineptitudes that remain undetected, for any weakness not already observed. He is now writing for somebody, for at least two fellow students as well as the instructor, and he knows that they are likely to respond vigorously to what he writes. As a result, he is both more stimulated and more chastened. The student feels that he is learning something, and he is the readier to learn. Besides, he is having fun.

Of course there are dangers and difficulties. Students, for example, are skillful mimics, and an inadequate student who wishes to escape embarrassment will quickly learn to write, "This is a good paper, John. It is well organized, and you make your points well, but you need to watch your sentence structure. Some of the sentences are not very clear." Of course the instructor can combat this sort of thing, and exposing imitative generalities soon becomes one of his major concerns. He can point out that these statements mean little without evidence, and what is the evidence? Still better, he can ask John if he knew what the criticism meant, and if not, why did he not ask the critic what it meant? What is good about the organization and bad about the sentences? The principle must be established early, and made to work, that a student can be pardonably uncertain as to what to praise and what to blame, but that failing to ask himself questions and then writing windy nonsense is outside the pale.

Perhaps the principal weakness in the system as I have described it appears in the meeting of students which is not attended by the instructor. When enthusiasm is high students go to this meeting zealously, but control is undoubtedly less there, however the instructor may manage a sort of remote control by turning conference discussions to a review of the talk in the student group meeting. Professor Sherwood has tried a variation upon the general plan which provides for a supervised meeting, during which the students read and revise one another's papers. The instructor is present in the room, but available only for consultation. The students criticize in groups during this class session, but do not criticize one another's papers outside this meeting. This variation provides for much less revising by the students, lacks the spontaneity of at least some meetings which students hold with each other, and is, I should say, not so good for the better students. It is certainly safer if the instructor is aiming at a reasonable minimum of revision, and is probably to be preferred if the instructor feels uncertain of his hold upon the class, or feels he has a relatively irresponsible group of students. Personally, the next time I use the method I expect to increase my control by having group conferences of four, and requiring the students in rotation to write a report of the meeting, which will become one student's theme for that week.

If the system does not cure student irresponsibility, it aggravates the consequences, and it may do either. Any laxity in attending the group meeting or in preparing papers on time or passing themes is uncommonly troublesome to the collaborative groups, since a shiftless student can cause his fellow students considerable inconvenience. Faculty members have long ago become inured to the nuisance students cause by being irresponsible, but students tend to be delicate creatures, not yet accustomed to the nuisance they can cause one another.

Some difficulties are certain to appear when the method is tried on a large scale. It requires office space, and teaching assistants who sometimes find themselves herded into large rooms may have difficulty obtaining privacy enough for group conferences. On the other hand, the system has many administrative adaptations. It would permit larger use of classrooms on Tuesday and Thursday, since a three-credit course does not meet at the scheduled hour three times a week. It permits an instructor to juggle his sections so that he can get whole days free, or mornings or afternoons free, to either concentrate or distribute appointments as he chooses. The procedure commends itself to Professor Souers partly because through it he envisages a system which will render freshman English obsolete as a course and will substitute instead a standard of competence to be attained, whether in three months or three years. The students would undergo some formal indoctrination, either by large lectures or through sections, from which they would proceed into collaborative groups like those described, where they would receive help so long as they want or need it. That adaptation of the system has not yet been tried.

Some supposed difficulties are more apparent than real. We were all disturbed a little at first by the fact that much of the student correcting was not well done, and that, accordingly, from an objective point of view, a paper is not so well corrected by this system as it would be if a competent teacher were to spend ten minutes or more on it. This reservation stemmed from the time when we assumed that students learn mainly from being "corrected." We soon observed, however, that the student learned from criticizing other people's papers, and from the fact that his inadequacies, when they came to light, became so much his personal business that he did something about them. As director of students' collaborative efforts I soon learned not to worry too much about individual lapses in correction, but to be much con-

cerned about the general approach to correction and improvement, confident that any important matter would be picked up fairly soon. And I learned that the instructor can occasion considerable alertness by remarking, "Mr. Smith, I notice a vague pronoun in the last sentence of your second paragraph, although to my surprise neither Miss Jones nor Mr. Davis seems to have caught it. The sentence reads as follows. . ."

In short, those of us who have been associated with the experiment at the University of Oregon thus far are convinced that we have worked up devices of considerable importance for the teaching of composition. Naturally, there is diversity of opinion as to which parts of the experiment have been most successful, as to which methods are most advisable, as to how valuable the approach may be, but all who have taught the system agree that they found unusual and unexpected advantages in the use of collaborative groups, and these teachers include some who were deliberately chosen because they were the most outspoken critics of the method when it was first proposed.

Of course, it needs further testing. For example, it has not yet been tried in honors sections, where some instructors believe it will be more than normally successful. Neither has it been tried in a remedial section, where some feel it will not work at all—although in my optimism I am not among them. It has not been tried on a large scale, nor with sub-standard teachers. This last we consider very important. We believe that beginners or graduate students or mature teachers with limited backgrounds will be able to teach the collaborative groups with relative ease and success. If necessary, a beginning teacher can prepare his conferences carefully, since they are brief and the material can be laid out beforehand. The attention of the students is likely to be good, and discipline easy. Any slip on the instructor's part is more easily passed over than in the classroom; the instructor has a chance to start fresh

every fifteen minutes instead of having to sweat out an hour when the class has inexplicably gone all wrong, and he can even standardize a sequence of conferences, and learn from one to the next if he has to. He can space his conferences and can prepare himself immediately beforehand for each one until he gains confidence. This prospect of the procedure is as yet only theory, although as a matter of course it will be among the matters for testing during the coming year.

Perhaps some concrete suggestions are in order on the basis of our experience thus far:

*Class meetings.* One meeting a week will suffice, but two are better. We have tried a large lecture combining several sections once a week; we have tried sections which maintain their individuality, one meeting a week, two meetings a week, or one meeting with a second optional meeting at the instructor's call. We have not tried the combination of a large lecture with discussion sections, although that is obviously possible and would have some advantages. Naturally, the less the class time is sacrificed, the more opportunity the instructor has for activities which can economically be carried on in groups of medium size—rhetorical analysis of models, checking exercises, class writing projects, and the like. The lectures have the usual dangers and the usual advantages of large assemblies.

*Collaborative groups.* We have found that three or four is usually the right number. Two is to be discouraged; they tend to pair off against each other. Four has the advantage that if one student is ill or withdraws, the minimum three remain. Larger groups complicate the circulation of papers, and unless all members of the group participate in the revision of each paper the meetings in conference suffer. An experiment is proposed, however, using seminar-sized groups with longer papers and some staggering of criticisms. Our experience suggests that on the whole members of a collaborative

group should be of relatively equal competence. B students and C students do fairly well together, but A students and D students do not, and generally groups profit from students of about equal ability.

*Forming groups.* On the whole, we have encouraged students to form their own groups. When the students know each other they do this quite well, the good students grouping together and the others finding their own levels, with suggestions from the teacher to correct occasional misgroupings. The system has not yet been tried with entering students, and we are considering a system of assorting students on the basis of a first theme, and dividing the class according to their apparent ability into divisions within which they may form their own groups. (On the whole, students seem to like whatever groups they work in, but if they do not, it helps that they have not been put there by the instructor.) We believe in shifting collaborative groups occasionally, at the end of every quarter, or at mid-term and at the beginning of a new semester under the semester system. Neither mingling nor segregating the sexes causes notable complications.

*Individual conferences.* Students were free to request individual conferences as in any other system, but we found that they received so much personal attention in the collaborative groups that they seldom asked to see the instructor outside the appointed group conferences, and that when they were asked to record their impressions of the procedure they listed as one of the chief advantages that they had been able to talk so much personally with the instructor. In obviating individual conferences the group conferences proved a considerable saving, since some students can be very consumptive of time.

*Grading of papers.* As a means of saving time I first agreed to grade only one of every three or four papers, grading those that I analysed with some care in conference. A student could appeal if he felt that some of his better efforts were

being neglected. This system worked well enough, and could be used for economy, but the students preferred a grade on every paper, and I was saving so much time that I increased my reading time, and with two hours allowed to a set of papers I could grade them all.

*Adaptability.* The method can be adapted to almost anything that individual courses require. I used it, for instance, in a term devoted to learning the investigative method, which ended in a documented term paper. By breaking down the program I had no difficulty fitting it into weekly projects which could be treated with the same unit treatment which is calculated mainly to accommodate weekly themes. I also tried assorting students by their interests, starting each group on a subject and letting one theme grow from another. For example, one group started on science, and refined it to marine life. I suggested a review of one of Rachel Carson's books, which grew into papers on the cycle of the seasons in the ocean, to oceanic volcanic mud, to Darwin's statement of evolution, to Darwin's character as revealed in his autobiography, to a comparison of the treatment of evolution in a modern and a nineteenth-century encyclopedia, to *Apes, Angels, and Victorians*. This trial section suggests that the method can well be keyed to a subject-matter course—some other departments at Oregon are considering it—or fitted into a scheme for general education. With a procedure of this sort the artificiality of "themes" readily reduces.

In summary, a number of us now believe in what I have called the Collaborative Group Plan because we feel it offers a better and more adaptable way of teaching composition. It can be used, we think, with the present expenditure of teaching time, and with the presently available staff, to improve teaching. I am happy that the University of Oregon seems interested in it at the present time only as a means of improving instruction, not as a means to

economy. The current experiments, on the other hand, are aimed toward utilization of staff, and the theory is that if the new plan offers a better way of teaching well, it may offer also a passable way of teaching when enrollments become so large that highly trained teachers cannot be found, even if money can be raised to appoint them. Furthermore, we suppose that the procedure will permit a relatively small number of experienced faculty to direct the work of a relatively large number of inexperienced and inadequately prepared teachers to do better teaching than they would have done with the conventional system.

None of us recommends this. We believe there is no substitute for a good teacher with plenty of time to do a thorough job, and we surmise that good, experienced teachers usually work out their own methods of obtaining results. But if the floods come, if the population watersheds continue to pour more and more untamed young upon us, we hope we have a method of stretching the levees a little, even though not enough. And meanwhile, we believe we have a better answer to the age-old question—How do you teach composition to thousands of youngsters who are not, and probably never will be, very zealous to compose?\*

\*This is to offer an apology to whomever it is due, if apology is in order. I have written as though this procedure is new, although as a matter of course its ingredients are not. Group tutoring has a long and honorable history; older students have long been used, for example in rural schools, to tutor younger students. If the procedure offers anything unique, its peculiarity grows from a different combination and application of recognized methods, and even in this we may have been anticipated. I do not, at this time, care to work through the bibliographies to find out, but if anybody has used a system like this I should be happy to see him duly recognized. Meanwhile, we have developed a procedure independently, whether or not originally, which we feel shows great promise, which is of peculiar interest just now, and which is less known than it should be.



# Scott Fitzgerald's Fable of East and West

ROBERT ORNSTEIN

He felt then that if the pilgrimage eastward of the rare poisonous flower of his race was the end of the adventure which had started westward three hundred years ago, if the long serpent of the curiosity had turned too sharp upon itself, cramping its bowels, bursting its shining skin, at least there had been a journey; like to the satisfaction of a man coming to die—one of those human things that one can never understand unless one has made such a journey and heard the man give thanks with the husbanded breath. The frontiers were gone—there were no more barbarians. The short gallop of the last great race, the polyglot, the hated and the despised, the crass and scorned, had gone—at least it was not a meaningless extinction up an alley. (*The Crack-Up*, p. 199)

AFTER a brief revival, the novels of Scott Fitzgerald seem destined again for obscurity, labeled this time, by their most recent critics, as darkly pessimistic studies of America's spiritual and ideological failures. *The Great Gatsby*, we are now told, is not simply a chronicle of the Jazz Age but rather a dramatization of the betrayal of the naive American dream in a corrupt society.\* I would agree that in *Gatsby* Fitzgerald did create a myth with the imaginative sweep of America's historical adventure across an untamed continent. But his fable of East and West is little concerned with twentieth century

materialism and moral anarchy, for its theme is the unending quest of the romantic dream, which is forever betrayed in fact and yet redeemed in men's minds.

From the start, Fitzgerald's personal dreams of romance contained the seeds of their own destruction. In his earliest works, his optimistic sense of the value of experience is overshadowed by a personal intuition of tragedy; his capacity for naive wonder is chastened by satiric and ironic insights which make surrender to the romantic impulse incomplete. Though able to idealize the sensuous excitement of an exclusive party or a lovely face, Fitzgerald could not ignore the speciosity inherent in the romantic stimuli of his social world—in the unhurried gracious poise that money can buy. Invariably he studied what fascinated him so acutely that he could give at times a clinical report on the very rich, whose world seemed to hold the promise of a life devoid of the vulgar and commonplace. A literalist of his own imagination (and therefore incapable of self-deception), he peopled extravagant phantasy with superbly real "denizens of Broadway." The result in the earlier novels is not so much an uncertainty of tone as a curious alternation of satiric and romantic moments—a breathless adoration of flapper heroines whose passionate kisses are tinged with frigidity and whose daring freedom masks an adolescent desire for the reputation rather than the reality of experience.

The haunting tone of *Gatsby* is more than a skilful fusion of Fitzgerald's satiric and romantic contrarieties. Nick Carraway, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the variety of life, attains Fitz-

\* See Edwin Fussell, "Fitzgerald's Brave New World," *ELH*, XIX (Dec. 1952), 291-306; Marius Bewley, "Scott Fitzgerald's Criticism of America," *SR*, LXII (Spring 1954), 223-246; John W. Bicknell, "The Wasteland of F. Scott Fitzgerald," *VQR*, XXX (Autumn 1954). A somewhat different but equally negative interpretation is R. W. Stallman's "Gatsby and the Hole in Time," *MFS*, I (Nov. 1955), 1-15.

gerald's mature realization that the protective enchantment of the romantic ideal lies in its remoteness from actuality. He knows the fascination of yellow windows high above the city streets even as he looks down from Myrtle Wilson's gaudy, smoke-filled apartment. He still remembers the initial wonder of Gatsby's parties long after he is sickened by familiarity with Gatsby's uninvited guests. In one summer Nick discovers a profoundly melancholy esthetic truth: that romance belongs not to the present but to a past transfigured by imagined memory and to the illusory promise of an unrealizable future. Gatsby, less wise than Nick, destroys himself in an attempt to seize the green light in his own fingers.

At the same time that Fitzgerald perceived the melancholy nature of romantic illusion, his attitude towards the very rich crystalized. In *Gatsby* we see that the charming irresponsibility of the flapper has developed into the criminal amorality of Daisy Buchanan, and that the smug conceit of the Rich Boy has hardened into Tom Buchanan's arrogant cruelty. We know in retrospect that Anthony Patch's tragedy was not his "poverty," but his possession of the weakness and purposelessness of the very rich without their protective armor of wealth.

The thirst for money is a crucial motive in *Gatsby* as in Fitzgerald's other novels, and yet none of his major characters are materialists, for money is never their final goal. The rich are too accustomed to money to covet it. It is simply the badge of their "superiority" and the justification of their consuming snobberies. For those who are not very rich—for the Myrtle Wilsons as well as the Jay Gatsbys—it is the alchemic reagent that transmutes the ordinary worthlessness of life. Money is the demiurgos of Jimmy Gatz's Platonic universe, and the proof, in "Babylon Revisited," of the unreality of reality ("... the snow of twenty-nine wasn't real snow. If you didn't want it to be snow, you just paid some money"). Even before

*Gatsby*, in "The Rich Boy," Fitzgerald had defined the original sin of the very rich: They do not worship material gods, but they "possess and enjoy early, and it does something to them, makes them soft where we are hard, and cynical where we are trustful. . . ." Surrounded from childhood by the artificial security of wealth, accustomed to owning rather than wanting, they lack anxiety or illusion, frustration or fulfillment. Their romantic dreams are rooted in the adolescence from which they never completely escape—in the excitement of the prom or petting party, the reputation of being fast on the college gridiron or the college weekend.

Inevitably, then, Fitzgerald saw his romantic dream threaded by a double irony. Those who possess the necessary means lack the will, motive, or capacity to pursue a dream. Those with the heightened sensitivity to the promises of life have it because they are the disinherited, forever barred from the white palace where "the king's daughter, the golden girl" awaits "safe and proud above the struggles of the poor." Amory Blaine loses his girl writing advertising copy at ninety a month. Anthony Patch loses his mind after an abortive attempt to recoup his fortune peddling bonds. Jay Gatsby loses his life even though he makes his millions because they are not the kind of safe, respectable money that echoes in Daisy's lovely voice. The successful entrepreneurs of Gatsby's age are the panderers to vulgar tastes, the high pressure salesmen, and, of course, the bootleggers. Yet once, Fitzgerald suggests, there had been opportunity commensurate with aspiration, an unexplored and unexploited frontier where great fortunes had been made or at least romantically stolen. And out of the shifting of opportunities from the West to Wall Street, he creates an American fable which redeems as well as explains romantic failure.

But how is one to accept, even in fable, a West characterized by the dull rectitude of Minnesota villages and an East epitomized by the sophisticated dissipation of



Long Island society? The answer is perhaps that Fitzgerald's dichotomy of East and West has the poetic truth of James's antithesis of provincial American virtue and refined European sensibility. Like *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Ambassadors*, *Gatsby* is a story of "displaced persons" who have journeyed eastward in search of a larger experience of life. To James this reverse migration from the New to the Old World has in itself no special significance. To Fitzgerald, however, the lure of the East represents a profound displacement of the American dream, a turning back upon itself of the historic pilgrimage towards the frontier which had, in fact, created and sustained that dream. In *Gatsby* the once limitless western horizon is circumscribed by the "bored, sprawling, swollen towns beyond the Ohio, with their interminable inquiries which spared only the children and the very old." The virgin territories of the frontiersman have been appropriated by the immigrant families, the diligent Swedes—the unimaginative, impoverished German farmers like Henry Gatz. Thus after a restless nomadic existence, the Buchanans settle "permanently" on Long Island because Tom would be "a God damned fool to live anywhere else." Thus Nick comes to New York with a dozen volumes on finance which promise "to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas, Morgan and Maecenas knew." Gatsby's green light, of course, shines in only one direction—from the East across the Continent to Minnesota, from the East across the bay to his imitation mansion in West Egg.

Lying in the moonlight on Gatsby's deserted beach, Nick realizes at the close just how lost a pilgrimage Gatsby's had been:

... I became aware of the old island here that had flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory

moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

Gatsby is the spiritual descendant of these Dutch sailors. Like them, he set out for gold and stumbled on a dream. But he journeys in the wrong direction in time as well as space. The transitory enchanted moment has come and gone for him and for the others, making the romantic promise of the future an illusory reflection of the past. Nick still carries with him a restlessness born of the war's excitement; Daisy silently mourns the romantic adventure of her "white" girlhood; Tom seeks the thrill of a vanished football game. Gatsby devotes his life to recapturing a love lost five years before. When the present offers nothing commensurate with man's capacity for wonder, the romantic credo is the belief—Gatsby's belief—in the ability to repeat the disembodied past. Each step towards the green light, however, shadows some part of Gatsby's grandiose achievement. With Daisy's disapproval the spectroscopic parties cease. To preserve her reputation Gatsby empties his mansion of lights and servants. And finally only darkness and ghostly memories tenant the deserted house as Gatsby relives his romantic past for Nick after the accident.

Like his romantic dream Jay Gatsby belongs to a vanished past. His career began when he met Dan Cody, a debauched relic of an earlier America who made his millions in the copper strikes. From Cody he received an education in ruthlessness which he applied when the accident of the war brought him to the beautiful house of Daisy Fay. In the tradition of Cody's frontier, he "took what he could get, ravenously and unscrupulously," but in taking Daisy he fell in love with her. "She vanished into her rich house, into her rich full life, leaving Gatsby—nothing. He felt married to her, that was all."

"He felt married to her"—here is the reaction of bourgeois conscience, not of calculating ambition. But then Gatsby is not really Cody's protégé. Jimmy Gatz inherited an attenuated version of the American dream of success, a more moral and genteel dream suited to a nation arriving at the respectability of established wealth and class. Respectability demands that avarice be masked with virtue, that personal aggrandisement pose as self-improvement. Success is no longer to the cutthroat or the ruthless but to the diligent and the industrious, to the boy who scribbles naive resolves on the flyleaf of *Hopalong Cassidy*. Fabricated of pulp fiction clichés (the impoverished materials of an extraordinary imagination), Gatsby's dream of self-improvement blossoms into a preposterous tale of ancestral wealth and culture. And his dream is incorruptible because his great enterprise is not side-street "drugstores," or stolen bonds, but himself, his fictional past, his mansion and his gaudy entertainments. Through it all he moves alone and untouched; he is the impressario, the creator, not the enjoyer of a riotous venture dedicated to an impossible goal.

It may seem ironic that Gatsby's dream of self-improvement is realized through partnership with Meyer Wolfshiem, but Wolfshiem is merely the post-war successor to Dan Cody and to the ruthlessness and greed that once exploited a virgin West. He is the fabulous manipulator of bootleg gin rather than of copper, the modern man of legendary accomplishment "who fixed the World's Series back in 1919." The racketeer, Fitzgerald suggests, is the last great folk hero, the Paul Bunyan of an age in which romantic wonder surrounds underworld "gonnections" instead of raw courage or physical strength. And actually Gatsby is destroyed not by Wolfshiem, or association with him, but by the provincial squeamishness which makes all the Westerners in the novel unadaptable to life in the East.

Despite her facile cynicism and claim

to sophistication, Daisy is still the "nice" girl who grew up in Louisville in a beautiful house with a wicker settee on the porch. She remains "spotless," still immaculately dressed in white and capable of a hundred whimsical, vaporous enthusiasms. She has assimilated the urbane ethic of the East which allows a bored wife a casual discreet affair. But she cannot, like Gatsby's uninvited guests, wink at the illegal and the criminal. When Tom begins to unfold the sordid details of Gatsby's career, she shrinks away; she never intended to leave her husband, but now even an affair is impossible. Tom's provinciality is more boorish than genteel. He has assumed the role of Long Island country gentleman who keeps a mistress in a mid-town apartment. But with Myrtle Wilson by his side he turns the role into a ludicrous travesty. By nature a libertine, by upbringing a prig, Tom shatters Gatsby's façade in order to preserve his "gentleman's" conception of womanly virtue and of the sanctity of his marriage.

Ultimately, however, Gatsby is the victim of his own small-town notions of virtue and chivalry. "He would never so much as look at a friend's wife"—or at least he would never try to steal her in her husband's house. He wants Daisy to say that she never loved Tom because only in this way can the sacrament of Gatsby's "marriage" to her in Louisville—his prior claim—be recognized. Not content merely to repeat the past, he must also eradicate the years in which his dream lost its reality. But the dream, like the vanished frontier which it almost comes to represent, is lost forever "somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark field of the republic rolled on under the night."

After Gatsby's death Nick prepares to return to his Minnesota home, a place of warmth and enduring stability, carrying with him a surrealistic night vision of the debauchery of the East. Yet his return is not a positive rediscovery of the well-springs of American life. Instead it seems

a melancholy retreat from the ruined promise of the East, from the empty present to the childhood memory of the past. Indeed, it is this childhood memory, not the reality of the West which Nick cherishes. For he still thinks the East, despite its nightmarish aspect, superior to the stultifying small-town dullness from which he fled. And by the close of *Gatsby* it is unmistakably clear that the East does not symbolize contemporary decadence and the West the pristine virtues of an earlier America. Fitzgerald does not contrast Gatsby's criminality with his father's unspoiled rustic strength and dignity. He contrasts rather Henry Gatz's dull, grey, almost insentient existence, "a meaningless extinction up an alley," with Gatsby's pilgrimage Eastward, which, though hopeless and corrupting, was at least a journey of life and hope—an escape from the "vast obscurity" of the West that once spawned and then swallowed the American dream. Into this vast obscurity the Buchanans finally disappear. They are not Westerners any longer, or Easterners, but merely two of the very rich, who in the end represent nothing but themselves. They are careless people, Tom and Daisy, selfish, destructive, capable of anything except human sympathy, and yet not sophisti-

cated enough to be really decadent. Their irresponsibility, Nick realizes, is that of pampered children, who smash up "things and creatures . . . and let other people clean up the mess." They live in the eternal moral adolescence which only wealth can produce and protect.

By ignoring its context one can perhaps make much of Nick's indictment of the Buchanans. One can even say that in *The Great Gatsby* Fitzgerald adumbrated the coming tragedy of a nation grown decadent without achieving maturity—a nation that possessed and enjoyed early, and in its arrogant assumption of superiority lost sight of the dream that had created it. But is it not absurd to interpret Gatsby as a mythic Spenglerian anti-hero? Gatsby is great, because his dream, however naive, gaudy, and unattainable is one of the grand illusions of the race which keep men from becoming too old or too wise or too cynical of their human limitations. Scott Fitzgerald's fable of East and West does not lament the decline of American civilization. It mourns the eternal lateness of the present hour suspended between the past of romantic memory and the future of romantic promise which ever recedes before us.

## The Genuine and Counterfeit: A Study in Victorian and Modern Fiction

WAYNE BURNS

And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and it can lead our sympathy in recoil from things gone dead. . . . But the novel . . . can also excite spurious sympathies and recoils . . . can glorify

the most corrupt feelings, so long as they are conventionally "pure."

—D. H. LAWRENCE

The human mind has broadened since Homer. Sancho Panza's belly has burst the seams of Venus' girdle. . . . Hence, what I

detest most of all in the arts, what sets me on edge, is the *ingenious*, the clever. This is not at all the same as bad taste, which is a good quality gone wrong. In order to have what is called bad taste, you must have a sense for poetry; whereas cleverness, on the contrary, is incompatible with genuine poetry.

—FLAUBERT

IT is no longer fashionable to speak disparagingly or slightly of the Victorians. Many of us are now looking back to a past that never was, in order to discover a future that we are afraid never will be; and it is reassuring to find, in the foreground of that past, a world of solid comforts and even more solid securities—a world of order and discipline based on faith and affirmation. Of course it is all an historical mirage. No such world ever existed, except in the Tupperish minds of anxious Victorians who were themselves looking to the past. Yet this is the world presented in so many of the Victorian novels that are now being revived and worked into a tradition which, logically enough, culminates in the morality of *The Caine Mutiny*, and on a more sophisticated level, the banalities of *The Catcher in the Rye*.

This is not to deny the work of the better Victorian novelists, or its relevance to serious modern fiction. In art as in ideas the Victorian age is the prelude to our own, and if we are to understand the triumphs and defeats of modern novelists we may well begin by considering the triumphs and defeats of the Victorians. But if we are to do this intelligently we must, in the very beginning, be prepared to recognize basic critical distinctions that are too often overlooked or evaded.

With few exceptions the Victorian novels now being revived are at best "good stories." Like Trollope's *The Warden*, they are islands in time—islands so skillfully created they offer adults the same kind of escape from reality that *Treasure Island* offers children. Admittedly they are, in their own terms, masterpieces of a

sort, but in this sense *The Maltese Falcon* and *Gone with the Wind* are also masterpieces of a sort. For they too create islands in time, perhaps less pleasant, less vivid, less fully populated than their Victorian counterparts, yet sufficient to achieve the same end, i.e., symbolic insulation against the real world rather than symbolic illumination of it.

The distinction between such novels and, say, *Wuthering Heights*, or *Ulysses*, is therefore the distinction between art and what may be designated "counterfeit art." I say "counterfeit" rather than "imitative" because technical resemblances may be misleading. *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, is a true work of art, *The Warden* counterfeit—not because Trollope was a less skillful technician (though it happens he was), but because his novel is a conventionalized daydream masquerading as serious realistic fiction, pretending to do for Trollope's society what Austen did for hers, and achieving not a lesser but an opposite effect, i.e., insulation rather than illumination.

More obviously counterfeit are Reade's *It Is Never Too Late to Mend*, Kingsley's *Yeast*, and Disraeli's *Sybil*—or to cite a modern successor in the same vein, John Hersey's prize-winning novel *The Wall*. Despite their direct concern with immediate causes and ideas these novels also insulate, in much the same way modern journalism insulates—the way Hersey himself, in his non-fictional *Hiroshima*, insulated the American public against the meaning of Hiroshima, by fitting its horrors to a pattern of stock responses. Hersey's intentions have always been noble and honest. Of that there can be no question. Moreover, *The Wall* depicts certain aspects of life in the Warsaw Ghetto with real skill and narrative power; so that, technically speaking, it marks a tremendous advance over his earlier novel *A Bell For Adano*. In the last analysis, however, these technical accomplishments only serve to vivify a formula-picture; and such a



picture, no matter how skillful the brush work, can never be more than a melodramatic island in time.

Also counterfeit, for all its virtuosity, is Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. Although Hemingway has in the past written some rather obvious counterfeit (not to mention *Across the River*), he has never to my knowledge resorted to the literary faking that characterizes his latest novel. It is almost as if he had been consulting our modishly mythic and archetypal critics and decided that, to ensure the moral significance of his fish story, he had best invoke the shades of Huck Finn and Moby Dick as well as those of Joe DiMaggio. Unless I have misread the story—and Hemingway's own comments (*Time*, 13 Dec. 1954) convince me that I have not—it is as insulative in its pretentiousness as that once highly-regarded novel *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, or such plays as *The Rose Tattoo* and *The Lady's Not for Burning*, which hark back to the "literary" plays of Lytton and Talfourd.

Such works bear out Flaubert's devastating comments on "the ingenious, the clever"—as do the equally clever though less pretentious novels of Collins and Le Fanu. While there is no denying that Collins's *No Name* is every bit as ingenious and well-constructed as Geoffrey Tillotson says it is (in his *Criticism and the Nineteenth Century*, 1951), what does such a critical demonstration finally prove? That the novel is a genuine but limited work of art, as Tillotson implies? Or that it is counterfeit plus incidental virtuosity? The answer clearly must be counterfeit, unless one is prepared to grant artistic status to such novels as *Anthony Adverse* and Mrs. Barclay's *The Rosary*, on the basis of their equally remarkable virtuosity. Alex Comfort, in *The Novel and Our Time* (1948), has acknowledged *Anthony Adverse* to be "a successful illusion in genre-writing, a novelistic equivalent of Hassan or Rimsky's Scheherazade. . . ." And another serious novelist (quoted by

Q. D. Leavis in *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 1939) has declared "Mrs. Barclay a great writer on her plane. . . . I had infinitely rather have written *The Rosary* than *The Forsyte Saga*, for example."

Flippant as it may seem, this last statement is critically justifiable, since, as Leavis goes on to demonstrate, *The Forsyte Saga* is but a "literary" variation on a best-selling formula. And this is my point with regard to all such novels—from *The Cloister and the Hearth* to *The Razor's Edge*. *Gone with the Wind* is not, as the editors of the Heritage Press suggest, a modern *Vanity Fair*. Insofar as the likenesses they cite are qualitative, and not merely superficial, they tend to prove, not that *Gone with the Wind* is genuine, but that *Vanity Fair* is counterfeit—which it most certainly would be, were it not that Becky, Thackeray's alter ego in the novel, exposes the shallowness of Thackeray's own exposure of "Vanity Fair," and in doing so illuminates the pomp and circumstance that *Gone with the Wind* merely glorifies. Thackeray is not a greater Margaret Mitchell, any more than Dickens is a greater Reade or a greater Wells. The qualities that set Dickens apart from Reade are the qualities that link him with Dostoevski, and that by technical standards make him a lesser novelist than Reade. Malcolm Elwin has argued the latter point in *Victorian Wallflowers* (1934), and if one accepts his critical premises, his arguments follow quite logically; in fact they can be used to prove that not only Reade but Collins and any number of other Victorian novelists are superior to Dickens. But why elaborate farce? Technique is all that connects the work of these novelists with the best of Dickens, that and seeming similarities in form and esthetic surface; in all else, in what it finally is and does, their fiction is as far removed from that of Dickens as calendar art from the paintings of Chagall or Klee.

What looks like a distinction in degree is therefore a distinction in kind, and the

two kinds (as Flaubert, Lawrence, and Leavis have indicated) are mutually incompatible. The critics who have tried to overlook or deny this distinction have either (like Elwin and Tillotson) mistaken esthetic means for esthetic ends, or (like Elizabeth Bowen and Anthony West) have altogether mistaken rhetoric for art. In her *Anthony Trollope: A New Judgment* (1946), Bowen acknowledges the validity of James's remark that "Trollope's imagination had no light of its own." Nevertheless she goes on to defend him as a man of faithful talent who "holds up a mirror in which English faces, seasons, and scenes, remain. . . . Can one wonder it should reassure us to look across the years, and find in the Trollope mirror faces like our own?" The great virtue of the mirror which "gives that mirage illusion to the ordinary scene" is thus a virtue that it shares with our slick magazines and our more uplifting Hollywood movies. At least this is what Miss Bowen herself implies through her imaginary character, William, who presumably speaks for the youth of England, in phrases which might by those of a Mrs. Miniver or an American advertising executive: "Trollope's novels are a support against the sort of hopelessness we're inclined to feel. . . . It's essential for us, these days, to believe in people . . . ordinary people with the knack of leading ordinary lives. . . ." In other words, Trollope's novels give us the polar opposite of what great fiction from Swift to Dickens to Faulkner has given us, what lesser but genuine fiction from Defoe to Virginia Woolf and T. F. Powys has also given us.

Whether or not Bowen's Trollope includes all of Trollope I cannot pretend to say, having read only a few of Trollope's sixty or so novels. My point is simply that Bowen's defense is indefensible, that in trying to save Trollope she has herself become a Philistine. For her new judgment invokes the principles of those scholars and critics—the sincere if somewhat confused Platos of our "well-ordered state"—who maintain that fictional art, to be

good art, must be "responsible" and "popular," i.e., positive, affirmative, and clear,—like Trollope and Hersey, in contrast to the negative and decadent obscurity of Joyce and Kafka, or the pessimistic clarity of Hardy and Lawrence, or more recently Orwell.

According to Anthony West, (*New Yorker*, 28 Jan. 1956), "1984 is not a rational attempt to imagine a probable future. . . ." Indeed it is not. How could it be? A "rational attempt to imagine" is a contradiction in terms—a contradiction that can only be resolved by denying the workings of the imagination i.e., by substituting the artist as Pandarus for the artist as Prometheus—which is the way that West, following J. Donald Adams *et al.*, resolves it in his essay, by arguing that Orwell wrote as Swift wrote, not as a Christian minister should preach. Taken seriously, this argument flatters Orwell, whose fiction is limited by the very fact that he is more of a preacher than a creative writer. But West the frightened Philistine cannot see this; he can only conclude that we must write of Orwell "as a French critic has written of Swift, 'He carries the rational criticism of values to a point where it menaces and impairs the very reasons for living.'" To which West might have added: as another French critic (Taine) has written of Dickens, or as another English critic (T. S. Eliot) has written of Hardy and Lawrence.

The ultimate fallacy of such criticism—whether it invokes the sanctions of God and the Church or merely those of its own fears and frustrations—is that it restricts the vision of the artist to the formulas of the critic, and in the process inevitably denies the nature of art and the creative process. For if literary history proves anything it proves that fiction cannot be written to any order without ceasing to be art; it cannot because art is creative, because, in the words of André Gide, "the most beautiful things are those that madness prompts and reason writes." Which means, among other things, that



the novelist must be free to follow his "madness" (or as I prefer to designate it, his "difference"), wherever it leads. He must because, as Proust explained, "Only that issues from ourselves which is unknown to others. . . . Intuition for the writer is what experiment is for the learned, with the difference that in the case of the learned the work of the intelligence precedes and in the case of the writer it follows." In other words intuition, or "difference," always comes first, always exercises directive control. The function of intelligence or technique is not to deny or restrict "difference" but to give it the fullest possible expression that can be achieved within the limits of fictional form.

This is not of course to suggest that the novelist can write in a vacuum. Even if he would, he cannot avoid having "ideas" or "beliefs" based on a more or less consistent ordering of his intellectual heritage; furthermore, he cannot avoid working from and through his beliefs in an attempt to give form and meaning to his "difference." All this is an inevitable part of the creative process, since "difference" totally abstracted from "roots" (i.e., elements of oneness with past and present) would be little more than personal idiosyncrasy. But roots are what the novelist moves from, not towards, in keeping with the demands of the creative process. Although his direction is ultimately towards oneness, he cannot stop with any of the ready-made onenesses provided by myth or belief. To be illuminative his oneness must be his own, of his own making, like that of Forster in *A Passage to India*. And to achieve this kind of oneness, he is obliged, like Forster, to move through and beyond the accepted and the archetypal to a point where he sees man as the measure of all things: not man as an abstraction, but the man (the "darkness," the "difference") he feels inside himself. This is why the novelist cannot possibly adhere to any set of prescriptions, not even his own; why he must see all myths, beliefs, and systems

of thought as either means or impediments, to be rejected or revolutionized or somehow made to serve his own artistic ends.

While some of the greatest Victorian novelists (more particularly those whom Virginia Woolf has identified as "unconscious writers") may give the appearance of flouting these axioms, it is only a matter of appearance. In their best work they have followed a creative process much like that which E. D. H. Johnson has described in *The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry* (1952), with "unconscious intention" corresponding to "alien vision." Given the conditions of Victorian authorship it could hardly be otherwise. The only hope for the novelists, as for the poets, was to break through their Victorian chains. And for most novelists it could not very well be a conscious breakthrough, since they did not realize they were in chains: they were under the illusion that they were free, or at least as free as they should be; that the ideals they accepted were true; that these ideals, given fictional trimmings, were not only true but beautiful.

Even Charlotte Brontë, perhaps the most isolated and rebellious of all the Victorian novelists, fell victim to this illusion—totally in *The Professor*, partially in *Shirley* and *Villette*. It was only in writing *Jane Eyre*, when she was still naive enough to consider her own responses "conventionally 'pure,'" that she was able to draw upon her deepest feelings, and so transform her otherwise routine Gothic story into a passionate quest for love and human fulfillment. Of course she retained the outward trappings of melodrama, as well as her Methodist morality and phraseology. These were the only words and forms of expression she knew. But at her best she gave her words an emphasis all her own—a personal accent that expresses, not what a Victorian Methodist lady was supposed to feel, according to the prescribed moral-religious doctrines of the time, but what Brontë felt she did feel.

And it is those feelings, expressed in her differentiated language, which underlie the melodramatic surface of the novel, and give it the poetic depth Woolf described in *The Common Reader*.

Dickens also tried to fit a considerable part of his fiction into Victorian formulas, and when he succeeded, as in *Nicholas Nickleby*, the results are as deplorable as critics from Taine to Q. D. Leavis have declared them. But Dickens's "madness," deriving from what Edmund Wilson explains as the rebel and criminal within him, was too powerful to be always held in check by Christmassy conventions. When he remained true to his "difference," as in *Great Expectations*, he laid bare the reality of portiered Victorian life with the devastating power of a Dostoevski or a Celine—finally to create some of the greatest fiction of all time. And a similar dichotomy can be discerned in the work of lesser Victorian novelists, many of whom, like Mrs. Gaskell, were able to achieve genuineness in only parts and passages of their various novels.

The only novelists who wrote "conscious" fiction of artistic consequence were George Eliot and Henry James—if for purposes of convenience James may be considered a Victorian. Unlike their fellow novelists, they recognized the forces they were up against, and sought to conquer them by means of conceptual understanding and conscious technique—i.e., they were confronting directly and consciously the forces that Dickens and Charlotte Brontë were confronting unconsciously and indirectly. As a consequence their mode of creation is more analytic, their work itself more sophisticatedly realistic, than that of Dickens and Brontë. Yet these variations in fictional mode are not in themselves qualitative. If Micawber's belly has once again burst the seams of Venus' girdle, so much the worse for the girdle. The final test of a novel, according to James himself, is the quality of mind of its creator; and by this test, Dickens and Brontë take their places along

side Eliot and James and the other genuine novelists of the period. The novelists eliminated are the counterfeiters who denied both the conscious and unconscious aspects of their "difference" in favor of Victorian sameness.

The triumphs and defeats of these Victorians carry directly over into modern fiction, the main difference being that the modern novelist is even more on his own against even more virulent cultural forces. In a world that every day moves closer to 1984 it is ridiculous to speak of writing for the people, in the sense that Dickens wrote for the people. In this sense there are no people left to write for—only a few stray individuals here and there, most of whom are professional or semi-professional scholars and critics and writers. To say that modern writers write for themselves and for one another is no longer merely Philistine. They not only do, they must—in order to protect themselves against the deadly demands of our popular culture, even though, in resisting these demands, they necessarily impose restrictions on their art. In his self-conscious isolation the modern novelist cannot possibly "laugh and cry as he writes," the way Dickens, for example, in his naïveté and his oneness with his readers, could laugh and cry over Little Nell. That kind of spontaneity, and the illuminating chiaroscuro Dickens at times achieved through it, is simply beyond recapture in the modern world—as are innumerable other qualities that characterize the greatest Victorian fiction. "To blame contemporary writers for failing to achieve the nineteenth century scope and facility is," quoting Alex Comfort, "on a level with blaming an elephant for failing to give birth to a mammoth."

This point has been underlined and further clarified by Kafka, in his comments (taken from his *Diary*) acknowledging his indebtedness to Dickens's *David Copperfield* in "The Stoker," which became the first chapter of *Amerika*. "The Stoker," Kafka notes, is

nothing but an imitation of Dickens, more still the projected novel. The charming man who radiates happiness, the work of low kind, . . . but above all the method. My intention was, as I am seeing now, to write a Dickens novel, enriched by the sharper light taken from our time and by the dimmer one emanating from myself. Dickens' riches and recklessly powerful flow, but—because of that—passages of a horrible lack of power where he, tired, but stirs round what he has already achieved. Barbaric the impression of the nonsensical whole, a barbarity which I, however, have avoided owing to my weakness and the lessons my being an epigone has [sic] taught me. . . .

There is no disputing this self-criticism up to the point where, in his modesty, Kafka implies that his "weakness" is wholly personal. Actually this weakness afflicts all modern writers as a consequence of their alienation. Among recent novelists only Celine approaches Dickens in the "recklessly powerful flow" of his prose, and his "recklessness," close analysis will reveal, is conscious and calculated in comparison with Dickens's.

But what Kafka and Celine lack in sheer power and spontaneity they have redeemed by the lessons their being epigones have taught them. And these are the lessons that every modern novelist must learn, regardless of whether he tends towards "conscious" or "unconscious" modes of fictional expression. To write fiction comparable to that of Dickens or George Eliot, the modern novelist, like Kafka, is obliged to know himself and his techniques as well as the world he lives in, for it is only by means of this epigonic awareness ("this sharper light taken from our time") that he can strengthen his "difference" (the dimmer light emanating from himself) and thus achieve the intensity necessary to illuminate the darkness that is modern civilization.

Kafka's lessons therefore reiterate Gide's and Proust's. They show that the compromises of Victorian fiction are no longer artistically viable, that the novelist who sacrifices any part of his vision to

accepted values is placing himself under handicaps no amount of genius can overcome—not even when, as in the case of Camus, the sacrifices are deliberate and controlled. In *The Plague* Camus departed from the vision which had enabled him, in *The Stranger*, to write one of the greatest novels of our time. Presumably his intention was to write more positively and constructively within a more conventional form, in an effort to give his work something of the scope and popular appeal of Dickens's fiction. But in making *The Plague* more positive and popular he so muted his vision that, with the exception of a few passages, the entire novel is reduced to pedestrian allegory. The positive ideas may be fine, as separable ideas or ideals, but they are no substitute for vision, and in trying to make them so Camus has succumbed to the concepts of responsibility that have defeated so many other socially conscious novelists, from Reade to Gheorghiu.

Of course it can be argued that all these failures—Camus's included—are failures in technique. But this is to fall once again into the fallacy of equating technique with art—a fallacy that becomes more dangerous as technique becomes more complex. For the complexities lend themselves to artistic evasion as well as to artistic discovery, and in the present atmosphere, evasion is not only more comfortable and more fashionable but infinitely more profitable. The destination of Tennessee Williams' streetcar was not desire, but success, and many of our younger novelists are following mythic-symbolic paths that lead toward the same artistic dead end. What these novelists and their critics have forgotten or have never understood is that there can be no substitute for vision. Before a novelist can write, he must see, and to see in the modern world, he must think and feel, not as a member or follower of any system, cause, or clique (religious, political, or literary) but as an individual human being aware of his "difference" and the demands of his art—or, as one novel-

ist has expressed it, "he must see everyone naked, and be as naked himself."

Once the novelist has reached this point, executive technique admittedly becomes all important, for it is through technique that he gives form to his vision, and so raises it to an intensity of expression that will illuminate the reality it explores. But even at this stage of the creative process the novelist is still on his own. If his vision is genuine, it is significantly unique, and will demand, if not unique techniques, at least individual variations on accepted techniques. His obligation, following the example of our greatest modern novelists, is consequently to work out technical variations equal to his needs—the ultimate test being whether or not they enable him to realize his difference in expressive form. If they do, then they are sound, regardless of whether they are fantastic, surrealistic, realistic, naturalistic, or a combination based on still other possibilities. In *On This Side Nothing*, for ex-

ample, Alex Comfort has employed direct realistic techniques seemingly antipodal to those of Kafka's *In The Penal Colony*, yet his novel represents a creative variation on Kafka's theme. And similar comparisons can be drawn between the works of technically disparate novelists from Dickens and James to Lawrence and Joyce.

Although the qualitative likenesses which connect these writers one with another may not be so obvious as the technical similarities which connect them with their counterfeit counterparts, it is nevertheless up to us, as readers and critics, to distinguish between the qualitative and merely technical connections. For it is only by bringing the genuine together, and setting it apart from the counterfeit, that we can realize the creative aspects of our Victorian heritage—not only in Jamesian fiction but in such truly Dickensian novels as those of Kafka and Celine, or, more recently, Ellison's *Invisible Man*.

## Snow on Parnassus

### Or, A Faulty Connection in the Poets' Corner

CHARLES KAPLAN

#### I.

*It Will Be a Beauteous Evening, Here With TV*

My heart leaps up when I behold

Antennae in the sky:

So was it when the day began,

So is it now when eve's at hand,

So be it when the night grows old,

Or let me die.

The Child is father of the Man,

And I could wish my nights to be

Bound each to each by the National Broadcasting Company.

#### II.

*A Benison from Tennyson*

Come into the garden, Maud,

For there's nothing on TV;



Come into the garden, Maud,  
 And look at what's to see.  
 Since our set's been installed, we've scarce been abroad—  
 Just look at the scenery!

This garden—can it be ours?  
 It's so long since we've been out.  
 Here's a lovely bed of flowers  
 I'd almost forgotten about:  
 For our days are now reckoned in Hours,  
 As we sit at the set and grow stout.

The rosebush gives an odor sweet,  
 And the scent doth my spirits renew;  
 Soft grasses bend beneath my feet—  
 'Tis enchanting, strolling with you.  
 But now we must haste, with footsteps most fleet:  
 The commercial is just about through.

## III.

*John Greenleaf Grows Whittier*

Blessings on thee, little man,  
 Barefaced boy, who watchest Fran  
 Sport with Kukla and with Ollie,  
 All dispelling melancholy;  
 With thy gaze fixed on the screen,  
 Attentive to each changing scene;  
 With thy red eye, redder yet  
 From staring at the TV set.  
 From my heart, I wish thee joy—  
 For I was ne'er a TV boy.

Prince thou art—before thine eyes  
 The world of fancy doth arise.  
 Swift-moving drama, life in flux,  
 Sponsored by Kraft and eke by Lux;  
 Music, laughter, passion, tears,  
 Presented by the favorite beers.  
 Thou hast more than prince could buy  
 In the reach of ear and eye.  
 So blessings on thee, and much joy—  
 And move over, little boy.

## IV.

*To a High Lark*

Hail, TV's blithe spirit!  
 Berle thou ever wert  
 That from Broadway, or near it  
 Givest thy mad heart  
 Without rein in electronically-channeled art.

Wilder still and wilder  
 Out thy japes thou flingest;  
 All my evenings milder  
 Are past; the doorbell ringest  
 As neighbors do arrive, and out the beer I bringest.

Bemused, I hear the laughter  
 As on the screen thou'rt shown.  
 And thus it is that after,  
 When I'm again alone,  
 I wish that they would buy a set, so I might view my own.

## V.

*A Kubla Kind Words on Color*

In Washington did FCC  
 A colored pleasure-screen decree,  
 And engineers their work began  
 On gadgets that would color scan  
 As well as black-and-white TV.

So twice five miles of legal ground  
 With briefs and pleadings were girdled round;  
 But soon the screens bloomed forth in hues  
 More bright than nature's scenery,  
 With tempting shades of reds and blues  
 To part us from our greenery.

A damsel with a dulcimer  
 On a program once I saw;  
 It was a most engaging maid,  
 And a commercial that she played  
 Singing with Perry Como.

Could I revive within me  
 Her melodies and tone  
 In rainbow-colored hues, 'twould win me  
 More than black-and-white alone.  
 I'd fly with speed adown my stair  
 And buy as she had urged;  
 And all who saw should cry Beware!  
 His flashing eyes! his floating hair!  
 Disconnect his TV set  
 Till this madness hath been purged,  
 For he on color hath been fed  
 And drunk the milk of video.

(This poem was not completed, due to the arrival, at this point in its composition, of a visitor coming to watch Howdy Doody.)

# Detachment and Tragic Effect

ELIAS SCHWARTZ

FEW critics have attempted to explain how tragedy achieves its unique and powerful impact upon the human mind. Aristotle tells us about a catharsis but leaves most of our questions about it unanswered. Subsequent critics have told us what Aristotle meant, but they have differed a good deal among themselves, and however interpreted, the theory of catharsis always seems inadequate. When we see *King Lear* (we are told), we are purged of pity and fear. Perhaps this is so (we reply), but there must be more to it than that. And how does tragedy purge us of these emotions? It won't suffice to speak in general terms about a catharsis, if what we want to know is how a group of actors make us weep and shudder and yet give us (paradoxically) great pleasure.

An explanation of the tragic effect more nearly adequate than the theory of catharsis is implicit in the *Poetics*. It depends upon these basic Aristotelian doctrines: (1) tragedy is an imitation of human action, (2) tragedy arouses pity and fear, and (3) tragedy produces the pleasure proper to it.

## 1

A clear definition of "human action," the object of imitation in a tragedy, is hard to come by. Although he does not define it in the *Poetics*, Aristotle seems to conceive of "action" as something different from "plot." The plot, he says, "is the imitation of the action:—for by plot I here mean the arrangement of the incidents." And again: "the plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole . . ." (*Poetics*, 6.1450a; 8.1451a). Francis Fergusson, in an excellent essay entitled "*Macbeth* as the Imitation of an Action" (*English Institute Es-*

says, 1952), explains the distinction between plot and action. The plot is the arrangement of outward deeds or events and it is used by the dramatist to imitate the action, which is an inner, spiritual movement. In *Oedipus Rex*, for example, the action is the quest for Laius' slayer, which persists through the changing situations of the play. The action, of course, is the heart of the play, but we can only know about it by means of the plot, the outward events which point to and define it. Fergusson's distinction between plot and action and especially his conception of action are extremely fruitful notions in the criticism of drama, as Fergusson himself has demonstrated (*The Idea of a Theater*, 1949). His conception of action is crucial to our inquiry here and provides a real basis for the analysis of the tragic effect—as I hope presently to show.

## 2

We must not, says Aristotle, "demand of Tragedy any and every kind of pleasure, but only that which is proper to it. And the pleasure which the poet should afford is that which comes from pity and fear . . ." (*Poetics*, 14.1453b). Pity, we learn (*Poetics*, 13.1453a), "is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves." In the *Rhetoric*, fear is further defined as

. . . a pain or disturbance arising from a mental image of impending evil of a destructive or painful sort . . . men do not fear all evils . . . but only such as mean great pain or ruin, and these only when they appear to be, not remote, but close at hand, imminent. . . . Speaking generally, we may say that those things make us fear which when they befall, or threaten, others, make us pity. (ii.5.1382a)

Now if we accept this description of fear, we are faced with two problems. First, if fear is a painful emotion, how can tragedy, which arouses such an emotion, afford us pleasure? Secondly, if fear is occasioned by *one's own* expectation of evil, how can fear be aroused in us, when we, as spectators, are not ourselves threatened? Let us defer the first problem until we deal with pity (the same problem arises then) and attempt to solve the second problem now.

If we fear only when *we* are threatened, and if as spectators we *do* fear, we must put ourselves, in some sense, into the role of the protagonist—he who is threatened and has cause for fear. As we watch a performance of *Oedipus Tyrannos*, *we* are not threatened. And yet we *do* fear. There is, I think, only one way to explain this: we somehow identify ourselves with Oedipus. To say that we actually become Oedipus is, of course, absurd. But we do not merely sympathize with him; somehow we are taken out of ourselves; we “become” him for a while. It is not only Oedipus who is threatened; somehow we are threatened too.

We cannot, however, thus account for the arousal of pity. For, although pity, like fear, is a painful emotion, it is (unlike fear) felt *for someone else*. We pity those we know well, says Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, ii.8.1386a), “so long as they are not too closely allied to us. In the latter case, we have the same feeling as if we ourselves were threatened.” It would seem that the spectator’s very self-identification with the protagonist will prevent his feeling pity; to feel pity, the spectator must “stand apart” from the protagonist. Yet Aristotle tells us that tragedy arouses pity *and* fear.

To account for this, we must assume that the spectator only *partially* identifies himself with the protagonist. Part of his soul becomes one with the protagonist; part of it remains detached. To the degree that he identifies himself with the protagonist, the spectator fears the evil that threatens them both; to the degree that

he remains detached, the spectator observes ruin come upon the protagonist and pities him. Only thus can the spectator pity and fear simultaneously.

## 3

“Why is it,” St. Augustine wonders (*Confessions*, III.2), “that man desires to be made sad, beholding doleful and tragical things, which yet himself would by no means suffer? Yet he desires as a spectator to feel sorrow at them, and this very sorrow is his pleasure.” In the terms of our own inquiry, how can tragedy give us pleasure, if both pity and fear are painful emotions? We can resolve this paradox by developing our previous analysis. But first we need to analyze pleasure itself.

We must insist first of all that the pleasure one gets from art is different in kind from sensual pleasure—even though the senses are “utilized” in all the arts. The pleasure that art produces involves the whole soul, not merely this or that sense faculty. Sensual pleasure then need not detain us; but how shall we define pleasure which is not sensual? Our best approach will be to discover its source in real life, for the pleasure of art is not essentially different from that involved in life.

Now in life itself the “lowest” (i.e., least intense and least complex) pleasure results from, or is a concomitant of, simple existence. One is, of course, seldom aware of such pleasure; it is so slight that it usually goes unnoticed—especially during periods of health and security. But during times of peril, when one’s existence is seriously threatened, one becomes acutely aware, not only of the desirability of life, but of the pleasure involved in merely being. At such times, misery and pain do not seem really to matter: the only thing that matters is life itself.

If simple existence is the source of the simplest and least intense pleasure, it seems to follow that “higher” (more intense and complex) pleasure comes about as a result of higher states of existence.



And higher states of existence are achieved through *action*, in the sense defined by Fergusson: not outward, physical deeds, but the movement of the soul in all its modes. It follows, furthermore, that the level of existence achieved through action will depend upon the degree of order attained by, or implicit in, it. Since the action is human action, it must be ordered with respect to moral principle. Hence the higher the principle with respect to which the action is ordered, and the better ordered it is, the higher will be the level of existence achieved. And the greater will be the resultant, or concomitant, pleasure.

What then of the emotions? The emotions, I suggest, are simply *signs of action*. The more intense and finely ordered the action engaged in, the more intense will be the emotions. The quality of pleasure will vary in direct proportion to the quality of emotion, or (if you will) to the level of existence that gives rise to it.

Now tragedy is an imitation of human action. And the spectator, by partially identifying himself with the protagonist and observing the tragic action, *himself* engages in highly-ordered and intense action. His pleasure, therefore, should be proportionate to the quality of the tragedy he witnesses. But what of the pain involved in pity and fear?

*There is no pain.* Since the spectator only partially identifies himself with the protagonist and always remains partially detached, he can, and does, fear the evil which seems to threaten them both; but he is at the same time aware that the evil which threatens the protagonist does not really threaten *him*, that what occurs on the stage is, after all, only on the stage. And the same holds true of pity. Thus the spectator, possessed of this double consciousness, engages in intense, highly-ordered action and feels the emotions and pleasure resulting therefrom. *But not the pain.* In real life, pity and fear are painful because they occur while one is facing actual evil. But in watching a tragedy, one has one's cake, as they say, and eats it.

"The delight of tragedy," Dr. Johnson observes, "proceeds from our consciousness of fiction; if we thought murders and treasons real, they would please us no more."

The spectator's partial detachment not only enables him to avoid the pain involved in real-life pity and fear; it enables him to view the action "from the outside," so to speak, to see it as an ordered and meaningful whole. And this perception, reaching fullness at the close of the play, further enhances the spectator's pleasure.

This process has a countertype in common experience. Everyone, I suppose, has gone through experiences involving intense and painful emotions. Now while one is an actor in such a situation, he is so much engaged in it as actor that he is incapable of viewing it as a whole, in all its relations and full significance. Only as *recalled* does such an experience become really meaningful—and this not merely because of the passage of time. When one recalls such an experience, he makes of it something like a vestigial drama: he patterns the events, attributes motivation, fixes causal and temporal relations. The recaller, moreover, "becomes" simultaneously *both actor and observer*. He relives his experience and at the same time stands apart from himself, viewing his experience as a complete and meaningful whole. And this is why one's experience—even painful experience—is never so moving, so meaningful, so pleasurable, as when it is recalled as part of the past.

A similar process, I suggest, takes place in the spectator of a tragedy—except that the meaning and order of the action are pre-determined by the dramatist. Having engaged in the action of the play, the spectator can, at the close of the play, see that action as a meaningful whole because of his partial detachment. In a famous passage, A. C. Bradley remarks that the spectator acquiesces in the terrible events of a tragedy only because he can perceive, as through a glass darkly, some moral order underlying them. Yes; and it is precisely his *detachment* that enables the spectator

to see a formative rational principle—a *logos*—in the action of the play.

## 4

The theory I have attempted to elucidate may be applied, I believe, in the analysis of particular dramatic works. Here I can only suggest some of the ways in which it may be applied.

One of the functions of the Greek Chorus, for example, is to "remove" the spectator from the actuality of the play, to prevent the spectator from too closely identifying himself with the protagonist. And this function complements that of providing both moral and emotional stand-points for the spectator. The Chorus of many a Greek tragedy might profitably be studied from this point of view.

In the tragedies of Shakespeare, in place of a Chorus, we find various "choric" characters (Enobarbus, Friar Laurence, Lear's Fool) and, perhaps more important, "choric" scenes which throw the main action and the protagonist into different perspectives and "place" the spectator at key moments "on the outside," enabling him to view the action as a meaningful whole. Such a scene is the Willow scene in *Othello* (IV.iii), where we are given an "objective" vision of all the loveliness which Othello is soon to destroy. Other scenes come to mind: the Porter's scene in *Macbeth*, Ophelia's mad scenes in *Hamlet*.

In those tragedies which make little use of "choric" characters and scenes, Shakespeare uses another device for a similar purpose. Some of his tragic heroes, it has often been noted, tend to dramatize themselves, to see themselves as actors in their own dramas. Whether this is to be taken as a trait of the hero's character or not is, I think, a matter for debate. But that this tendency in the protagonist makes for the kind of effect I have described seems to me beyond question. Particularly in the closing moments of the play, the protagonist will suddenly see himself as from a perspective beyond his own awareness. He sums up—it may be falsely. Yet in

thus becoming in a final moment of perception—in a kind of epiphany—detached from himself, the protagonist facilitates detachment in the spectator. And this both enhances the tragic pity felt by the spectator and sharpens his vision of the whole tragedy.

The most notable instance of this occurs in *Othello*, a few moments before the end of the play (V.ii.340-348). Near the close of *Coriolanus*, a similar self-dramatizing speech by the protagonist throws his character into a final brilliant light and illuminates the whole tragic action:

If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,  
That, like an eagle in a dovecote, I  
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioles.  
Alone I did it. Boy? (V.vi.113-116)

The summing up may be profoundly ironic, as in Brutus'

My heart doth joy that yet in all my life  
I found no man but he was true to me.  
(V.v.34-35)

The use of verse in tragedy, furthermore, aside from its virtue as a vehicle for precise eloquence—the controlled communication of character, thought and emotion—has this further advantage: it serves, by its formality, to lift the tragic action above the plane of "realistic" drama. Many a critic has remarked the depressing effect of modern attempts at tragedy, as contrasted with the exhilaration felt at the close, say, of *King Lear*. The reason for this is not, as has often been argued, that modern man has lost a sense of human dignity, but that the modern playwright strives for (and is praised for) extreme realism. He not only tends to write drab and lifeless prose, but he fails to provide any formal means in his play to prevent the spectator from completely identifying himself with the protagonist. As a result, the spectator cannot detach himself sufficiently to perceive whatever total meaning the play may possess. And many a modern tragedy—*Ghosts*, *Beyond the Horizon*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* come to mind—may actually be painful.

## Gerald Warner Brace: Teacher-Novelist

ARTHUR S. HARRIS, JR.

THE question "Can a man who teaches also write?" is seldom asked today, now that college teachers are writing novels and filling magazines with their stories. The list of teacher-writers is formidable: Stegner, Strode, Trilling, Warren, Bellow, Schorer, and many more. One of them is an excessively modest man whose seventh novel was published last summer (1956). Now Gerald Warner Brace, who teaches English at Boston University is at work on eighth. His best known book, *The Garretson Chronicle*, was widely acclaimed, sold close to fifty thousand copies, and has been quietly forgotten. More than one reviewer of his recent *Bell's Landing* spoke of Brace as an underrated novelist, and the *Times* critic asked when Brace was finally going to be recognized as a major American novelist.

Since Brace does nearly all of his writing in the summer up at Deer Isle, Maine, he is pretty much the *académicien* during the college year. He teaches a few of the standard literature courses, but his best work is done in the writing seminar where he is more of a guide than a teacher. While he may let the students do much of the talking, he does not sit back with the quiet pomposity some teachers assume, watching students flap their wings. When he speaks, it is unswervingly to the point. But he has too much respect for the pride of even a struggling student writer to be flippant with inferior work; he is simply honest.

Brace is no magnetic teacher, trying to dazzle students with knowledge and entertain them with classroom wit. He teaches with quiet confidence and resists even approaching the stereotype of a college professor. At fifty-four, his handsome, Brahmin face is barely lined. His figure is ath-

letic, as though he had not given up skiing, mountain-climbing, or tennis—which he hasn't. Only his graying hair reveals his age.

Brace has never been far from the classroom. After graduating from Amherst, he studied architecture at Harvard. He gave it up after a year and stayed on in Cambridge to earn his masters and doctorate in English. Then he taught at Radcliffe, Williams, Mt. Holyoke, Dartmouth, Amherst. In 1939 he settled down at Boston University.

It was in 1936, while Brace was teaching at Mount Holyoke College, that Putnam's published his first novel *The Islands*. Like all Brace novels to follow, its locale was New England. The story concerns Edgar Thurlow, who leaves his Maine coastal settlement to be taken over by a Boston spinster who finances him through Harvard. After college and a brief love affair, Thurlow returns to the fishing and boat-building life of Maine.

Though he has naturally developed in the nearly twenty years since *The Islands* appeared, this first novel reveals the qualities that have made Brace a novelist of stature. Like its succeeding books, it is dominated by scene. Brace has few equals in New England landscapes and perhaps none in describing her coastline, especially the jagged rock- and spruce-covered coast of Maine. On the other hand Brace has never been strong on cities, and when Thurlow leaves Maine to live in Boston, *The Islands* weakens in both scene and characterization.

Brace's first novel has three other qualities all evident in his later books. (1) *A prose style so perfected and shaped that it is difficult to find anywhere a poorly written sentence.* "I write slowly," Brace once

said, "so that when each sentence finally emerges, it is as finely turned out as I can get it." (2) *A pace so leisurely it almost stalls*. Brace novels are patient books, written unhurriedly and apparently intended to be read the same way. If for a few pages Brace describes the slant of the late-winter sun on a Back Bay street and the color of the brownstones in thin pale sunlight, the reader is meant to linger and savor. (3) *An indefinite sense of time*. Perhaps because he is trying to impose a measure of timelessness on his novels, there are few references to outside events: presidents come and go, but Brace characters live in their own environment, only occasionally moved by something major outside, like a depression.

For his next two novels, Brace turned to the Vermont countryside. *Wayward Pilgrims* (1938) is about a young college instructor with a fellowship to study Vermont speech who meets the sensitive and intelligent Margot; they become "two pilgrims." But his second novel of Vermont, *Light on a Mountain* (1941), is the best of these early books. It introduces a device which Brace was to use again: the opposite brothers, one the practical man, the other the idealist. ("Our gulf-like differences made it possible for us to get along as casual strangers.") The Gaunt brothers, Henry and Morton, are brought up on a Vermont farm. Henry goes to college; Morton stays at home with Sylvia, one of the finest women in Brace's gallery of New England people, and a good silencer to those who wondered whether Brace could create women as fully-realized as his men.

For its images of the rolling hills and wooded mountains of Vermont, *Light on a Mountain* is perhaps unsurpassed. Here are the spruce woods on the side of Stafford Mountain; here are the mountain valleys in the early morning October light, "oceans of opaque billowing mist, turned pearly in the first light, then golden, then blinding white in the full power of the sun." And here are the same mountains in winter, the trees "stiff shapes of

frost standing hard and ghost-like in the blue, each twig and stem built up into thick ice patterns reaching always toward the wind, scarcely vibrating, but steadily and monotonously whishing."

*Light on a Mountain* reflects Brace's admiration for Robert Frost, who was an instructor of English during Brace's first two years at Amherst. The book is sprinkled with Frost-like sentences, ("You could come to the two roads parting in a wood and not see that one was any better or worse"), good Yankee talk, and fine descriptions of pastures, west-running brooks, meadow pools, matted grass, berries—and always the Vermont mountains.

These first three novels did not sell well and eventually all were remaindered. When Brace's publishers did not see how they could "carry" him through another novel, the manuscript of *The Garretson Chronicle*, the story of three generations of a suburban Boston family, was submitted to Norton, who has since published all of Brace's books. It was Putnam's loss and a "sleeper" for Norton, for the novel sold nearly fifty thousand copies.

*The Garretson Chronicle* (1947) is narrated by Ralph Garretson, who breaks from the stolid, scholarly tradition of his family to live his own life, which he tells of. But perhaps the first third of the book, with its fine picture of old Randall Garretson, an Emersonian out of date in a modern world, is the best. The book gained almost unqualified praise. It was called one of the finest novels of the year and a worthy candidate for the Pulitzer Prize. Reviewers spoke of Brace's dry wit, his exquisitely precise prose. Since the book concerned Boston, was narrated in the first person, and was consciously biographic, it was compared with Marquand's *The Late George Apley* and Santayana's *The Last Puritan*.

In some ways its successor, *A Summer's Tale* (1949), was a disappointment. In this romance Brace returned to Maine to write the fable of an island community off the coast where life is idyllic. When Anthony Wyatt's sloop is wrecked on the reefs



guarding August Island, Wyatt meets the vacationing Marquises from Boston. He finds life on August Island untroubled. Everyone swims without suits and the world seems far away. Peace is shattered as the Navy announces plans to use the islands for experiments. Brace tells this allegory of island life with humor and a little fantasy, but the blending of the real and the fantastic rub the edge off each other. If the people in this modern *Tempest* seem less carefully drawn than those of *The Garretson Chronicle*, it may be that Brace's inventiveness is inferior to his personal recollections—a fact he admitted a few years ago to an interviewer from the *Worcester Sunday Telegram*. But *A Summer's Tale* is redeemed by its incomparable descriptions of the sea and sailing. (Brace owns his self-designed sloop.) Here is the shimmering summer sea, placid and gentle; here it is gray and leaden, then wild in a northeast gale.

Having spent so many years in colleges, it was inevitable that Bruce would some day write a full-fledged novel of college life. True the protagonist of an earlier novel had been an instructor, but the locale was not primarily a campus, as in *The Spire* (1952), a novel of life at "Wyndham," a small eminent New England college not unlike Amherst. It is a good novel, tightly constructed, descriptive, wry. *The Spire* re-introduces Henry Gaunt, who has now become a professor and widower. At Wyndham, he works on a book about a local poet, teaches, and has a romance with the president's secretary.

This backstage view of faculty life is lively, witty, probing. There is more vitality in *The Spire* than any of Brace's previous books. With shrewdness and yet compassion, he has caught Faculty Row perfectly. In one of his chapters describing a dinner party, Brace's satire rises to unexpectedly fine heights. The Flanders are entertaining; they are enormous snobs, especially Greg, in his dinner clothes apologizing for a whiff too much of bitters in his Old Fashioneds or dropping names at the dinner table—"his friend Ernie Hem-

ingway had introduced him to the world of vintage wine." The conversation is good and selective, and Brace's people come to life in a stroke or two. This high level of satire is not always maintained, but some of *The Spire* may be worthy of Jane Austen.

Brace is very conscious of his New England background and of his own feelings for the New England countryside in all seasons and the people he has known: Gloucester fishermen, Louisburg Square Bostonians, Vermont farmers.\* Steeped in tradition and conservatism, admiring Thoreau, Henry James, and Hawthorne—especially Hawthorne, Brace has tried to write about the values and traditions which are native to America, and especially to New England, America's oldest quarter. He has no axe to grind; he is, in fact, wary of philosophical positions. But he feels deeply the importance of small, solid people. "The truth about this era of ours," says Ralph Garretson, "is to be found not only among the warriors and crusaders but among all the folk who struggle and fail for no clear reason, who lead their lives of quiet desperation unnoticed by anyone except the recording angel."

It is to such people that Brace turned in his most recent novel, *Bell's Landing* (1955). The locale is the North Shore of Boston near Gloucester and particularly an old Victorian mansion where brothers Will and Harold Redfern have come to spend a childhood summer with their aunts. The boys' father has committed suicide and their mother is now going out to work as a nurse. As they grow up, Harold becomes a Harvard esthete who writes cryptic poetry. Will, who is younger, follows his mother through a succession of dreary

\* Actually Brace was born in Islip, New York, but his New England roots go far back. His mother was a Warner, early settlers of Farmington, Connecticut, and Bennington, Vermont. His grandfather, a friend of Emerson and Henry Ward Beecher, wrote extensively. His great-grandfather, John P. Brace of Litchfield, Connecticut, was editor of *The Hartford Courant* and a novelist.

tenements. In Holyoke, where he works in a garage and saves money for a second-rate technical school, Will meets Pop Sardis, a car washer, and his granddaughter Sally, a beautiful girl with a dark and mysterious interior. They love each other but do not marry. Later Will meets her and finds her unhappily married. The novel ends where it began, at Bell's Landing. The aunts have died, the caretaker has died, the house, which Will has now inherited, is falling apart. Beyond it glimmers the ocean, just as it did when he was a boy.

It is a fine novel, carefully conceived, artfully written, and as poignant as anything Brace has done. After two "different" novels, Brace has consciously returned to the design of *The Garretson Chronicle*. The story is narrated in the first person, a method permitting narrator Will to be a little too garrulous.

In all his novels Brace has handled love tenderly, sex discreetly. When a girl goes swimming in naked mixed company, Brace permits only a gentle reference to her "flanks." He manages a seduction or two (frequently out of doors or in the cabin of a sloop) with hardly an anatomical reference. The same code holds for the narrator of *Bell's Landing*: "It would have been good then if I could have gathered her up and kissed her, but it was still in a public street. . . ." Yet Brace finally comes to grips with passion in this new novel. "I know that writing about sex is in effect paradoxical," says Will, following his seduction by Sally. "The aim is candor and simplicity and freedom from superstition; the result is often a magnifying of the eroticism it has set out to dispel." With this new but restrained candor, Brace's *Bell's Landing* is more complete than any of his previous novels.

There is no questioning Brace's talents. He is a craftsman and a ranging scene-painter. His people are nearly all believable and they talk well whether they are Vermont hill-folk or Boston Brahmins. Yet with all these virtues, some of the novels fall a little short. They are compe-

tent, significant, occasionally brilliant, but never great. And one might fairly ask: Why hasn't a man with these abilities written a really major work?

The answer isn't easy. Possibly Brace needs more rigid selectivity. His accumulated detail sometimes seems self-indulgent. An intemperate critic once reviewed *A Summer's Tale* along with new novels by Clyde Brion Davis and Albert Maltz. "These novels," he wrote, "like all bores, tell everything."

Brace's inventiveness is limited. "I'm no good at making up stuff, at pretending," he once said. Now and then his attempts at invention seem strained. In one of the few scenes of physical combat in any of his books, he has Anthony Wyatt and June Marquise fell two others on a nearby boat; they topple like bowling pins. A Brace protagonist may go off to war, but he returns unchanged, except that he has learned poker. Perhaps too there is innate in Brace a discreetness, a kind of Puritanism which permits him only a narrowed look at a fragment of society. He sees mostly ugliness in cities and dismisses parts of them quickly: "the miserable streets and wastes" of the lesser cities north of Boston. However fine his portraits of an occasional humble city person like Pop Sardis, it is possible he hasn't quite embraced the city or the people.

These minor flaws detract from Brace's obvious and considerable talent. But he takes writing seriously and it is possible he may yet write a really distinguished novel. He has the energy, the talent, and most of all, in his modest way, the dedication. At the time his first novel was published nearly twenty years ago he spoke of the writer's life in one of his rare magazine articles: "It is like struggling to pin down a dream in the morning after you wake up: memory won't do it, words won't do it, nothing will do it. You are groping empty air. The white paper is still there in front of you, but it doesn't help; the four walls are silent; the enormous world outside is indifferent. And there you are, alone."

# Round Table

## A SUPPLEMENTARY CHECKLIST: AMERICAN SHORT FICTION EXPLICATIONS

ELIZABETH V. WRIGHT

The idea for such a checklist originated with Jarvis Thurston in *Perspective*,<sup>1</sup> and the following compilation is an extension of that list. An attempt has been made to have this list as complete as possible up to and including articles appearing through June 1956. However, the following should be noted (1) only American short stories have been indexed; (2) only articles with the text in English have been considered; (3) all items listed are analytic in nature, either of the story as a whole or an important part of it;<sup>2</sup> (4) the pages referred to are concerned with the analysis proper.

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<sup>1</sup> *Perspective*, VI (Summer, 1953), entire issue. Some copies are still available at one dollar: Perspective, Washington University P.O., St. Louis 5, Mo.

<sup>2</sup> A few items with some extrinsic material have been listed, but only in cases where such material was considered valuable as an aid to the analysis itself.

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## A PACING TECHNIQUE FOR CLASSROOM TEACHING OF READING

JAMES I. BROWN

Here at the University of Minnesota we use a combination of methods and materials in teaching developmental reading to college and adult students. We speak of this as a five-fold approach to reading efficiency, and refer by that to our use of (1) the Harvard Films and Readings, (2) tachistoscopic training, (3) timed readings in a variety of materials, (4) paced readings in a variety of materials, and (5) a master-word vocabulary approach, supplemented by LEX-O-GRAM, a new pocket-sized laboratory for vocabulary improvement.

To help us evaluate the relative effectiveness of these approaches, we asked our students to rank them in order of apparent usefulness. The tabulation of those rankings was a strong reminder that students are individuals. Every one of the five approaches was given some top and some bottom rankings. Despite varied individual reactions, however, students agreed in general that paced readings, a technique devised here some six years ago, was somewhat more useful than the others.

Actually our five-fold approach was predi-

cated on an awareness of individual differences and the conviction that no one method would work equally well with all students. With five different approaches we felt we need not worry if one or even two were not particularly productive with any given student; there were still three or four left which should insure excellent results.

In view of student reactions, it was thought that college teachers concerned with reading improvement might well be interested in knowing more about this approach—paced reading—which lends itself to classroom use with groups of from five to thirty or more as well as for individual use with a partner. In essence it is an adaptation of the principle which underlies much of the teaching of reading at the college and adult level—practice at faster-than-comfortable rates.

To prepare to pace a class through some selection in their textbook at, say, 500 words a minute, the teacher need only count the number of words in each column or page of that selection and divide those numbers by 8.3 to get the number of seconds which should be allowed for their reading. At 500 words a minute a reader covers approximately 8.3 words a second.

As an alternate procedure the teacher can prepare the necessary pacing information for the students to use outside of class. For all selections in the *Efficient Reading* text, we have, for example, prepared a mimeographed sheet with pacing times indicated. Each student is given that sheet at the beginning of the course in reading so that he may work with a partner outside of class as a supplement or substitute for work on a reading accelerator or pacer. Teachers also use the sheet for classroom pacing of any selection in the text.

Once the pacing times have been figured, the teacher directs the class to the article to be paced and explains the procedure. "When I tell you to begin, start reading this selection at what you consider to be a 500-word-a-minute rate. When you should be at the bottom of the first column or page, reading at that rate, I will say, 'Next.' If you have not quite finished, jump to the next column or page and read slightly faster, at-

tempting to adjust your rate as closely as possible to the paced rate as indicated at the end of each column or page throughout the entire selection." A stop watch or watch with a second hand is all the equipment the teacher needs.

The advantages are several. In the first place the purchase of individual reading accelerators to take care of a class of thirty would cost about \$2500 and put quite a strain on most English Department budgets. A stop watch is little or nothing in comparison. Second, the student is in a somewhat more natural reading situation, with no curtains or machines to become accustomed to or distracted by. Third, there is room for greater variation in rate as the student reads down the column. If he comes to a particularly difficult passage, he is able to slow down somewhat and then speed up again when he comes to easier material. A curtain coming down at a fixed rate does not permit so much latitude for normal and desirable variations of that kind.

Lastly, while the psychological advantages of machines should neither be overlooked nor underestimated, it must be remembered that they are but means toward an end. We are not interested in developing reliance on machines. We eventually want, not machine-propelled, but self-propelled readers, and the transition between classroom pacing and normal reading is apt to be less difficult than that between machine pacing and normal reading.

As teachers of reading, we are concerned with helping our students develop the mature interests and useful skills which will contribute most to their over-all educational growth and development. For teachers as well as students, improved academic achievement is perhaps one of the most satisfying outcomes. Last spring at Minnesota, for example, it was gratifying to note that of those select few graduating with distinction and high distinction, 38.6 per cent had had special training in reading. Since paced reading is a device which students themselves consider particularly useful, it provides an ideal opportunity for enlisting their full cooperation on the complex problem of increasing reading efficiency.

## TRANSFERRED TECHNIQUES FOR NON-MAJORS

ROSSELL HOPE ROBBINS

Teaching compulsory courses to students with initially limited interest in literature is a perennial difficulty. Yet sometimes methods already familiar to the students from their fields of specialization may satisfactorily be transferred to English studies, so that, by using common techniques of science and engineering pedagogy, non-majors come to enjoy reading. Two techniques in particular have proved profitable: (A) the presentation of general laws, and (B) the use of mimeographed *data-sheets*.

(A) The presentation at the outset of general laws, theories, or axioms to be tested during the semester. The students accept a given theory which they later verify by experiment. This inductive method—from general to particular—is frequently used as a short-cut for beginners. As a result, science students know what they are looking for; they are fitting parts of a jig-saw puzzle, and (at least in the undergraduate courses) have some idea of the completed picture.

When transferred to literary studies, this technique involves the students' acceptance of such axioms as: (1) Great literature expresses great ideas. (2) Great literature demonstrates a faith and confidence in man to analyze his own problems and to work toward their solution. (3) Great literature works to liberate man from whatever forces are holding back his full development as a human being. (4) Great literature presents the pertinent problems of the day, not by an array of facts and figures, but through human individuals and their emotions.

These laws are empirical, and therefore—because of the nature of the scientist's work—accepted more readily by him than theories of esthetics. They tie in, too, with his faith in human progress, trying to show that literature, like science, is also rational. These laws or theories depend, of course, on the assumption that the primary function of language is communication, and its corollary that the first function of literature is to communicate an idea.

(B) The use of data-sheets, generally cov-

ering the scope of the problem, the method of attack, the experiment to be performed, the steps to be taken, and the way the information necessary for a solution is to be gathered. This is just a simple device for teaching scientific procedure. Data-sheets too, steer young students along constructive channels, and away from purposeless or fake problems.

Data-sheets facilitate the application of the scientific method to literature, that is, the examination of the problems, the breaking down of a subject into its components, the assembling and classification of facts, the formulation of these facts into working laws or hypotheses, the interpretation of the answer or result, and its extension to other bodies of materials. Their use helps avoid the nonsense of students of tender years evaluating authors, and teaches sound literary research disciplines.

For literature courses, data-sheets give a résumé of the story or plot, the characters, the theme, notable passages (by page references), and relation to the historical background. They provide the basis for evaluating the foregoing general theories.

One fruitful experiment utilizing these techniques consisted of a semester's study by freshmen of Euripides' plays in the tortuous two-volume *Everyman* edition—an inheritance from a previous chairman's injudicious purchasing. The plays were presented as documents showing the reactions of an intelligent and sensitive man to the problems raised by the moral and intellectual deterioration of a once-great democracy. Data-sheets were provided for all the plays, in chronological order, with interspersed quotations from contemporary historians. Here is an example:

*Trojan Women* (415 B.C.) I.62-99:

Lament of Trojan women on their fates (Hecuba to Odysseus, Cassandra to Agamemnon, Andromache to Achilles' son; Polynece to be sacrificed), and murder of infant son of Andromache. Powerful anti-war play written to express revulsion of Athenian massacre of inhabitants of Island of Melos 416 B.C. Anti-



war government in Athens ask Euripides to write *Elegy* for Athenian Army defeated in disaster in Sicily in 415 B.C.

Notes: Scenes of war-horror due to Athena, daughter of Zeus (64). Denunciation of war (71-72, 92). Attack on Athenian renunciation of Great Tradition (94, 95—"the disgrace of Greece"). Effect of war on Greeks—the loss of humanity.

"I have remarked again and again that a democracy cannot govern an empire, and never more clearly than now. . . . You do not realize that when you make a concession to the allies out of pity, or are led away by their specious pleading, you commit a weakness dangerous to yourselves without receiving any gratitude from them. Remember that your empire is a Despotism exercised over unwilling men who are always in conspiracy against you." (Ascribed to Cleon by Thucydides, III.37)

All the plays illustrate one or more of the general literary laws, but clearly certain plays illustrate best one theory in especial. Thus, the *Trojan Women* has stimulated thought on the dichotomy of empire and democracy down to our own times. Similarly other "great ideas" are especially noticeable in such plays as *The Suppliants*, which extols the Great Tradition of Athens—"the people supreme . . . an equal right for all to vote" or "the people rule . . . Under written laws the poor and rich an equal justice find"; or in *Heracles Distracted*, which opposes a hypocritical state-controlled religion. These two plays also well illustrate the second axiom—the ability of man to work out his own destiny. *Heracles Distracted*, after elevating human qualities—"I, though a man, exceed in virtue thee, a mighty god"—concludes with stirring passages on the greatness of human courage. In the *Bacchae* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*, for example, the stress is on the third axiom, not only in set speeches, but inherent in the plot itself, where the gods and their prophets produce only human misery and destruction. *Electra* provides perhaps the best example of the fourth law: the study of immediate social problems through individual men and women. Here the data-sheet reads:

*Electra* (413 B.C.) I.159-197:

After many years' separation, Electra finds

Orestes, and together they plan the murder of Aegisthus, while sacrificing away from his stronghold, by Orestes, and also the murder of Clytemnestra, on pretext of showing off a grandchild, by Electra. Both suffer remorse.

A study of revenge. Thucydides calls this period a time "when men tried to surpass all the record of previous times in the ingenuity of their enterprises and the enormity of their revenges."

Notes: Account of death of Aegisthus (181-183). Attack on State Mythology through Apollo (194) and Delphi (pro-Spartan: "voice unwise of Phoebus," 185). Play shows that blood feud is immoral in a land which has laws. Praise of old values, now neglected—nobility from speech and actions, not from birth (169-170).

As the semester advanced and more plays were read, the students began to comprehend the seemingly doctrinaire laws and to apply them to other books. The study of Euripides and Athens helped them understand the function of the writer: to point out society's shortcomings and to uphold man's humanity. As the Peloponnesian War continued and Athens departed more and more from its heritage of democracy and enlightenment, Euripides became more outspoken in advocating these traditional values. The students saw a similar pattern of history in most American literature. *A Connecticut Yankee* was read not as a satire on the follies of the Middle Ages, but as a book full of great ideas about modern America; *The Grapes of Wrath* was considered essentially as a great monument to man's determination to survive and conquer all obstacles, natural and man-made. Exemplars of the third axiom—Dreiser, Sinclair, as well as Norris, the early Dos Passos, and Arthur Miller—showed that the standards the world sets up are wicked and anti-human and that society itself rather than the individual is at fault. The fourth law provided a touchstone which separated literature from polemic such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or *The Iron Heel*.

What was done with Euripides can be done with any other author or group of authors; and what was successful with science students can be successful with arts students.

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND THE ENGLISH TEACHER

WILLIAM D. BAKER

The best tool for finding answers to questions that plague teachers is, obviously, one's sense of curiosity.

Beyond this, there is one specific tool which I think all English teachers ought to possess, *The Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (ed. Walter S. Monroe, rev. ed., Macmillan, 1952, \$16.25 with educational discount). The *EER* is a general reference work reporting a critical synthesis and interpretation of educational research to 1948. It is not a mere catalog nor a review of individual studies; it tells what the research findings add up to in those 241 fields where sufficient literature justifies an article. New research since 1948 is included every three years in the periodical, *Review of Educational Research*. A few of the articles of particular interest to English teachers are: English—Language; Grammar and Composition; English—Literature; Child Development—Language; Handwriting;

Journalism; Reading—Teaching of; and Spelling. Each article lists an excellent bibliography which covers, fairly extensively, the important research reports in that field. I cannot recommend this work too highly. It is scholarly, relatively unencumbered by educational jargon, and fair in its treatment of controversial teaching methods or problem areas.

Had I been exposed to the *EER* in my pre-teaching days, I would have faced my classes with a lesser degree of ignorance. One may have his own ideas about how to teach and what is best for the student, but these ideas can benefit from constant review and broadening in the light of continuing developments in language instruction. If we do not make a serious attempt to review research and to find solutions to our problems by independent investigation, we may find ourselves taking a back seat to those of another discipline who will.

## ANOTHER MODERNIZED "SHIPMAN'S TALE"

PHILIP APPLEMAN

Concurrently with the appearance of Theodore A. Stroud's article, "Chaucer's 'Shipman's Tale' in Modern Dress" (*CE*, Nov. 1955), still another modernized version of the tale was being published, this one written by Shelby Foote ("A Marriage Portion," *Nugget*, Nov. 1955). Mr. Foote's story, however, did not appear in a "family magazine," as had the story Professor Stroud discussed, but in one of the new, very slick "men's magazines," which, having the aroma of the demi-monde about them, allow the contemporary author to escape the inhibitions of the family magazine and give him much the same tolerant reception that Chaucer's audience granted him. A summary of Mr. Foote's story will help to illustrate the significance of this.

The wife of a young insurance agent decides that her husband is now affluent enough to be able to grant her a few luxuries. She chooses

a black silk negligee as the "symbol of their break with penury." The "close-fisted" husband, however, refuses to buy it. The wife, therefore, in revenge, gets the necessary fifty dollars from a friend of her husband's, an opportunistic automobile salesman, in exchange for her favors. In the process, however, they are forgetful of time, and the salesman, having dallied too long, just gets away from the house as the husband returns. He immediately asks his wife if that was the salesman he saw leaving, and she has to admit it was. At this the husband is quite relieved; the salesman had borrowed fifty dollars from him at lunch and had promised to leave it at the house the same afternoon.

Because it appeared in an uninhibited "men's" magazine, then, this story could parallel the plot of the "Shipman's Tale" very closely. But what is most intriguing about Foote's analogue of Chaucer's tale is that it, like the story Stroud discussed, was suggested not by Chaucer, but by a joke the

author had heard from a friend, who had himself heard it as a joke. Mr. Foote had not read the "Shipman's Tale" until after the publication of his story. This bears out once more Professor Stroud's proposition that "even among the most literate Americans, folk tales are being transmitted orally and accommodated to the present scene." Unfortunately, the original source of Mr. Foote's story cannot be traced, but, as he writes me, to try to trace it would no doubt be "to wind up back at Chaucer, who probably heard it much as I did," which is probably right in both respects.

Whoever adapted Chaucer's story to a twentieth-century environment made some significant changes in it. (Mr. Foote says he retold the story "much as I heard it.") The surprise ending, for one thing, is a modern innovation, and shows, besides, something of the "folk" history of the modernized story. The "Maupassant ending," Foote says, "is just as it was"; indeed, the story could hardly have made its way through several retellings as a party joke without the abrupt disclosure which is a *sine qua non* for that genre.

There are, too, some significant changes in characterization. The husband, although he has changed occupations, retains much the same character as his original in Chaucer. His wife says he is "ugly and stern-jawed, not only tight-fisted but pig-headed, too." Compare this with Chaucer's "wife's" comment: "As helpe me God, he

is noghte worth at al / In no degree the value of a flye. / But yet me greveth moost his nygardyng" (ll. 170-172). The change of the lover's occupation, however, is a more revealing stroke. Daun John was a false friend and even a false lover. It is interesting, then, to note that, in order to adapt the treacherous monk's role to the contemporary, secular American scene, the anonymous manipulator of the tale saw fit to transform the monk into an automobile salesman; one is reminded immediately of the aggressively defensive nicknames ("Honest Charley") of some automobile dealers. Finally, the character of the wife in Mr. Foote's story is somewhat altered. Since contemporary American women take their "rights" for granted, the wife in Foote's tale does not take her feminism so seriously as did Chaucer's. Therefore her confession at the end of the story depends, not like Chaucer's "wife's," on her militant attitude, but rather on her being "caught red-handed" in the compromising situation.

Mr. Foote's story reminds us, then, not only of the obvious changes in the technique of story telling since Chaucer's time but also that the racy tales that Chaucer once read to the general court are now largely forced "underground" into magazines having restricted audiences, and that the medieval poet's studies in human nature are still valid, even though the details of his settings are no longer generally familiar.

## AN EXPERIMENT IN CORRECTION AND REVISION

LORRAINE K. LIVINGSTON

Many instructors of Freshman English bewail the dilatory attitude of their students toward correction and revision of themes. Most would like to put greater emphasis on correction and revision but cannot find class time for these two important phases of theme writing.

In Preparatory English classes at the University of Minnesota I have used a teaching technique that makes correction and revision an integral part of the theme assignment and that gives the student better

insight into the entire process of composition.

The first step was to select from the themes written the previous quarter a theme that had received a low grade because the writer had failed to limit the subject, had neglected to organize the material, had used vague and general language, and had made numerous and serious mechanical errors. I distributed multigraphed copies of this theme to members of the class. I asked them to read it critically and then to tell me whether

or not it was a good theme and how they thought it could be improved. Their interest was evident as they vied with one another in an effort to show that the multigraphed theme was a poor piece of writing. Though often blind to faults in their own themes (even after correction and criticism), the students almost immediately discovered that the writer of the theme being discussed had undertaken too large a subject, that he had not ordered his ideas properly, and that his diction was inexact. When we examined each sentence, the group was quick to point out not only such gross errors as the sentence fragment and the comma splice but also the numerous minor errors. Using the correction symbols listed in our handbook, the students indicated all errors in the margin of the theme and then made the necessary corrections in the copy.

As a second step, I suggested that the next theme assignment in the class should be a rewrite of the theme that we had analyzed and corrected. One student said that in his opinion it would be more profitable to write a new theme on a limited aspect of the subject, and others agreed with him. The themes that were subsequently written were more interesting than any before, and the grades were significantly higher than on previous themes.

The third and final step in the experiment

was the rewriting of the students' own themes. Although all of these themes represented satisfactory achievement for Preparatory English students, they were not, of course, wholly free from rhetorical and mechanical weaknesses. After correcting and grading the themes, I informed the students that their next assignment would be to rewrite these themes to secure better coherence, to improve the diction, and to eliminate mechanical errors. I urged them to look at their own themes as critically as they had looked at the multigraphed theme at the beginning of the experiment. The rewritten themes would have delighted any teacher of Freshman composition if for no other reason than that they were almost mechanically perfect. Gone were the flaws that had interfered with the communication of ideas in previous themes.

The results of this experiment seem to indicate that students in beginning English courses might become more self-conscious and more effective writers if the instructor assigned *fewer different themes*. He could then make the rewriting of certain themes take the place of the writing of new themes. With more time to spend on correction and revision the students might come to understand and practice the techniques understood and practiced by most professional writers.

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## Letter to the Editor

Sir:

I do not quite understand all of the thinking processes of those who work with TV in education. [See "English via Television," *CE*, Oct. 1956.] If a filmed lecture is an adequate substitute for a living man on the lecture platform, why did not the universities long ago film their best lecturers and repeat the filmed courses year after year? We could still be hearing and seeing Kittredge, Manly, and countless others. What magic is there in simply seeing the lecturer on the TV screen? Why, if filming courses of lectures was too expensive, didn't the universities record the voices of noted scholars delivering their lectures and simply play over the records year after year to students sitting in classrooms? There

may be some magic in hearing, but is there enough to justify the expense of recording when printed or mimeographed sets of lectures are so much cheaper?

There is something dreadfully wrong with much of the thinking about TV in education, if many of the samples collected by Mr. Knepler are accurate. We still don't understand very much about the educative process—at least from a scientific point of view—but any educator, in the old fashioned sense of the word, knows that mechanical devices do not produce, or even help very much to produce, a truly educated man.

DAVID BONNELL GREEN

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE



# Current English Forum

## BEST OF ANY MAN

JOHN S. KENYON

If it is true, as Professor Hughes suspects ("The Rise of 'Greatest of Any,'" CEF, CE, March 1956), that teachers of English have of late increasingly shown objection to the illogical idiom *best of any*, and the like, it is gratifying that they do perceive that the idiom is illogical. But it would be more gratifying if they would take the next step by recognizing that illogicality is not always a valid ground of objection to any construction long established in reputable usage. The following examples will at least show that the idiom goes quite a ways back in writers of some note.

"A Theef of venysoun, that hath forlaft / His likerousnesse and al his olde craft, / Kan kepe a forest best of any man" (Chaucer, *Physician's Tale*, 83-85). "Thanne wol I love yow best of any man" (*Franklin's Tale*, 997). "Their worshipp which thei tendre most of any ertly thing" (*Rolls of Parliament*, 1439, V. 8/2; OED, *tender*, vb. 2, 3). "He hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens" (Shakespeare, *MND*, IV. ii. 9). "I doe not like the Tower, of any place" (*R. III*, Folio; OED, *of*, 43.b, with note: "ellipt. *Of all (of any) = most of all*"). "Sir, he has the most *inverted* understanding of any man whom I have ever known" (Dr. Johnson, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 1904, II, 285). "Her manners are the most agreeable, and her conversation the best, of any lady with whom I ever had the happiness to be acquainted" (Boswell, in *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 1904, II, 285). "[The English language] is built upon the simplest principles, and governed by the fewest rules, of any language yet known" (Sheridan, *Preface to his Dictionary*, 4th ed., 1797). "He is the most fearful of giving pain, . . . and the most incapable of being selfish, of any body I ever say" (Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, 1923, p. 244). "Who had the exactest morals of almost any man I ever met with" (Franklin, *Autobiography*, 1926, p. 78). "The temperature of the Boiling Spring the same day was 45°, or the warmest of any water tried" (Thoreau, *Walden*). "He had the longest tongue and the shortest temper of any man, high or low, I ever met with" (Collins, *The Moonstone*, 1925, p. 22). "The gentleman I look up to most of anybody" (George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, quoted by Jespersen, *Gram.*, II. 5.413). "Mr. St. John . . . had the most winning presence of any man

I ever saw" (Thackeray). "He, first of any one, will understand" (Stevenson, quoted by Jespersen, *Gram.*, II. 5.413). "His versification is by far the most perfect of any English poet" (Saintsbury). "Which afforded me the greatest shock and surprise of any event in my adventurous life" (Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*). "He is the most of a realist, and the least of an idealist, of any poet we know" (Bagehot, Oxford World's Classics, CCVI, p. 484). "Surroundings that are the most gently beautiful of any English cathedral" (Batsford and Fry, *The Cathedrals of England*, 1941-2, p. 83). "Its architecture was amongst my earliest Norman, and was of the earliest Norman of any" (Howells, *Certain Delightful English Towns*, 1906, p. 131). "The finback has the tallest spout of any whale" (Murphy, *Logbook for Grace*, 1947, p. 147). "The American people are the most conservative . . . of any people in the entire world" (Barbour, *Atlantic*, Sept. 1944, pp. 77 f.). (*Any* is plural here—a true partitive.) "Its population would have remained the most carefully screened of any body of settlers ever to have come to America" (Carter, *NYTBR*, 20 April 1947, p. 7).

It is obvious that we have here a variant of the partitive genitive, as in *one of the men, the best of the houses*. In present English this genitive is nearly always an *of*-phrase, where in OE the inflected genitive is used, as in *John 6.60*: "Manega his leorning-cnihta cwædon"—"many of his disciples said" (Latin original has *ex discipulis*). But the inflected partitive genitive does occur even down to the present: "Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best" (Shakespeare, *Sonnet 106*); "My soul's far better part" (Pope, *Iliad*, l. 624); "It lasts but a second's fraction" (Peattie, *Reader's Digest*, Nov. 1949, p. 87). Before considering the origin of *the best of any*, etc., it is instructive to observe other analogical developments from partitive genitives. Note the sentence: "Much of his wisdom crept into her voice in the quiet room, and all of his charm" (Mary Ellen Chase, *A Goodly Heritage*, 1939, p. 162). Here *much of his wisdom* is a true partitive, *much* being only a part of *his wisdom*; but *all of his charm* is only partitive in form by imitation of the preceding true partitive, for *all* is coextensive with *his charm*. Murray shows by examples how the true partitive can give rise to the analogical partitive. He says,

(OED, of, 42.c) "Under the partitive form the whole may be included," giving the examples: "Take part of it, not the whole of it" (Murray); "We all of us complain of the Shortness of Time" (Addison, *Spectator*, No. 93); "There were only five of us; and more than twice as many of them" (Murray). In a story of three persons, Addison (*Spectator*, No. 215) has occasion to write *either of them*, a true partitive, and hence *both of them*, and *all of them*, false partitives by analogy. Many such illogical partitives have gained unquestioned acceptance in English. No teacher would think of correcting them in students' papers.

Professor Hughes holds (rightly I think) that when *any* is plural—as in the example from Barbour, *the most conservative of any people*—we have a true logical partitive genitive, which might be one source of the idiom *best of any man*. But since the great majority of examples show singular *any*, I suspect that the shift from the plural *best of all* to the singular *best of any* exhibits a similar particularizing tendency to that found in the idiom *one of those who is*:

"My worthy friend Sir Roger is one of those who is not only at peace within *himself*, but beloved and esteemed by all about *him*" (Addison, *Spectator*, No. 122).

I have shown that the "ungrammatical" singular verb and pronouns are by no means confined to informal speech, but are widely used in formal writing by great authors. See, for example, my note on *R&J*, III.1.5ff. (*American Speech*, XXIV, Oct. 1951, 161-165).

The frequency of the two idioms even in formal writings of reputable authors might well incline the English teacher to mercy in "correcting either or both of the idioms in the writing of their pupils. Why "correct" *the best of any man*, while ignoring *the whole of it*, *we all of us complain*, *there were only five of us*, *both of them*, *one of these fellows that claps me his sword*, all of them idioms equally illogical and all freely used both by current writers and by those that Jespersen calls, in a tingling phrase, "the great dead"?

JOHN S. KENYON

HIRAM COLLEGE

## At the NCTE Meeting (New York City, November 1955)

WILLIAM STAFFORD

Trying to act out what really was wrong with the place  
I stood in the way, purposely unable to move.  
The hurry awkwarded all of my honestest thought;  
so I acted it out, sure of nothing but truth.

There were people there more honestly awkward than I  
but no one who counted was willing to stumble at all.  
The only thing was to flee toward better mistakes:  
I fled for the subway, away from that storied hotel.

My feet lost to the day walked fast in the night,  
finding their own direction. "May they find,"  
I prayed, "what strikes from the flint of a smaller town,  
some place that springs up, answering to my mind.

"And some day in some backward place, by light of straight looking,  
my serious face—may it stand for a far-off sound,  
and the corner shadows that wait for my face to dissolve—  
may they welcome me homeward for good from this big town."

## News and Ideas

"THE ANSWERS SCIENTISTS GIVE are right or wrong, but we English students have to find out what you think." L. C. Knights (Bristol) faced the charge in talking to the English Seminar at the University of Amsterdam (reprinted in the July *Neophilologus*). He admitted that there was much subjectivity in the criticism and teaching of literature, but argued that the subjectivity was based on universally accepted premises: Good writing realizes the implications of its premises, bad writing doesn't. Quoting Conrad on fiction as moral discovery, Knights decided that quality in literature is dependent on the "degree of actualization of the issues that are put before us." What Knight lacks in depth in this discussion, he compensates for in the lucid directness with which he handles a problem that bothers (or ought to bother) some of your best students.

WITH SOMEWHAT LESS CLARITY, but with laboratory evidence to back him up, the Princeton psychologist C. C. Pratt gives Knights an assist in the September *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. His tests show that, while irrelevant factors may warp our esthetic judgments, under laboratory conditions of stability our judgments tend to follow a stable logic, although they are of course subjective. He comes to the conclusion that Bach's *B Minor Mass* and Tolstoi's *War and Peace* (novel version) are in some meaningful sense great works—and for an esthetician that is a profound admission.

THE SHAW BULLETIN'S NEW EDITOR, Stanley Weintraub (Penn State) anticipates an article on Shaw by Elmer Rice in the near future. He plans a symposium on the Shavian impact on the American theater (and will be glad to receive manuscripts on the subject). Membership in The Shaw Society of America is \$5 a year, which includes a subscription to the *Bulletin*, appearing three times a year.

HEMINGWAY AND THE CATHOLIC church are closer together than Catholic

critics have heretofore seen, according to Leo J. Hertzel (Quincy) in the October *Catholic World*. The heroes of the novels are disoriented searchers for secure values, who move against a predominantly Catholic background which Hemingway handles with respect, knowledge, and care. The contrast between the desperate major figures and the devoutly Catholic secondary characters in the novels is a profound one, and from a Catholic point of view the search for certainty is carefully and truthfully written.

THE MOST POPULAR POEM IN THE English language, "Dover Beach," is re-explored by Murray Krieger (Minnesota) in the autumn *UKCR*. He sees the imagery, diction, structure, and even versification uniting to embody the repetition and the lack of purpose of human gyrations. "The poem's form thus comes to be a commentary on the problem being poetically explored, a mirror which allows the poem to come to terms with itself."

WHAT DID "THAT TWO-HANDED engine" mean to Seventeenth-century readers? William Hog did a Latin paraphrase of "Lycidas" in 1694; according to John Steadman (August *N & Q*) Hog's Latin is even more confusing than Milton's English, and Hog seems not to have understood the phrase any better than any one else.

LAWRENCE LERNER (BELFAST) brilliantly dissects the cliché in the first article of the outstanding July issue of *Essays in Criticism*. It won't do, he says, to define the cliché as a worn-out expression, since so many well-worn expressions (e.g., "How do you do?") are still serviceable; further, some writers (he cites Raymond Chandler) we call cliché-ridden even when the phrases are new to us. It is not the individual expression which is objectionable, Lerner concludes, but an attitude toward the language in which we express our necessary commonplaces. Applying this to poetry, he turns up an illuminating difference between the clichés of Renaissance poetry and those of Romantic poetry.

IN THE SAME ISSUE KEATS'S "Ode to Psyche" receives a perceptive analysis from Kenneth Allott (Liverpool). The ode is not Keats's best, although Bridges and Eliot praise it highly, but it is the most architectural, and it culminates the most dramatically. Allott not only explicates with skill but draws widely from Keats's sources and biography.

T. S. ELIOT'S CONCEPT OF CULTURE is the subject of a chapter in Raymond Williams' forthcoming book, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950*, and the July *Essays in Criticism* prints the chapter. Williams correlates, explains, justifies, and often refutes *The Idea of a Christian Society* and *Notes Toward the Definition of a Culture*. While he disagrees with many of Eliot's conclusions, he decides (quoting Mill on Coleridge) that Eliot's conservatism "is well calculated to drive out a hundred absurdities worse than itself."

THE SCATTERED SHOTS IN THE war between British and American scholars are falling on friend and foe. Don Wolfe (Brooklyn), in "Milton Under Glass" *TLS*, 18 May) fires a shotgun blast at English reviewers for their remarks about his editorship of the Yale Milton. As a result he has been peppered from his own side of the Atlantic by J. Max Patrick (Queens, N.Y.) in the *Seventeenth Century News* (Autumn 1956). Wolfe was defending the first volume of the Yale Milton against a *TLS* charge of overly-thorough "Germanic" scholarship; but, Patrick points out, Wolfe's defence of Germanic thoroughness would have been sounder had he not slipped five errors into one footnote of the Yale Milton, and these in a reference to a work by A. S. P. Woodhouse, who is a member of his own editorial board. This, Patrick maintains, is only one of many flaws in the volume under Wolfe's editorship.

F. W. BATESON, THE EDITOR OF *Essays in Criticism*, concludes the July issue by disagreeing with four correspondents from Adelaide, Australia, who praise him for printing Robert Graves' "These Be Your Gods, O Israel" (a re-

view of contemporary poetry) in the April issue. Graves' article, answers Bateson, rather than being praiseworthy, was guilty of "gross critical irresponsibility and . . . blatant factual errors." Besides, it cost the magazine £22.

"THE AGE OF SENSIBILITY" IS the term Northrop Frye (Toronto) suggests in the June *ELH* for the period roughly from 1750-1800. Literary historians have tended to see it as either an anticipation of Wordsworth or a reaction to Pope. But the period has characteristics of its own, not to be found in the ages before or after it—especially its concept of literature as process, not as product: Fielding and Sterne give us not so much the story as the process of telling the story. The paper was read at the 1955 MLA meeting.

ROBERT FROST'S "MOWING" IS the subject of a new technique in rhythmic analysis by Seymour Chatman (Wayne). This is part of a 67-page discussion of the rhythm of English verse in the summer *KR*. Whitehall (Indiana), Stein (Washington), and Ransom (Kenyon) also participate, and the whole exchange of views will be available to readers in bound reprints "at cost."

EZRA POUND'S TREASONOUS RADIO talks from Rome have been published on microfilm by the Library of Congress, priced at \$3. Robert Fitzgerald, in the Autumn *KR*, feels that the early Pound would have favored hanging the author of these abysmal speeches for literary crimes alone. Fitzgerald surveys the poetic and mental degeneration of Pound from 1928-1956, while admitting the debt of all recent poets, including himself, to Pound's work and critical stimuli.

YVOR WINTERS TAKES SIXTY pages in the Autumn *Hudson Review* to suggest "Problems for the Modern Critic of Literature," admitting at the end that "This essay has been merely a rapid outline. . . ." He concludes that the short poem is the greatest of literary forms today, and that greater achievements in it are possible.



## New Books

### Literary Biography

COLLECTED LETTERS OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford, 1956, 2 vols., 1219 pp., \$16.80). Here, after many years of research and meticulous editorial preparation, are the first two volumes of Professor Griggs's collection of all the extant Coleridge letters. Hitherto the student of Coleridge has had to go to a dozen sources for his correspondence, in addition to E. H. Coleridge's edition of the *Letters* and Griggs's supplementary *Unpublished Letters*. The present collection will include all these (more than four-fifths reproduced from the original holograph) together with some 600 letters that have never before been published. The first two volumes contain the letters Coleridge wrote between 1785, when he was a Bluecoat Boy at Christ's Hospital, and 1806, when, broken in health and spirit after his sojourn in Malta, he had separated from his wife. These letters lack the sparkle and verve of Byron's, nor can they match the astonishing revelation of intellectual and emotional growth in Keats's correspondence, but they are more important historically than either of these, as evidence of a national movement of mind. Mill's division of nineteenth-century English intellectuals into the two nations of Benthamites and Coleridgeans, positivists and idealists, applies;

and Coleridge's letters exhibit the development of a thinker who was to affect powerfully the course, not only of English poetry and criticism, but philosophy, theology, and politics as well. But of such a result Coleridge himself, almost neurotically humble about his own capacities, had little inkling in 1806. In these letters we watch the tragic clouding over of the boisterous gaiety and the physical and intellectual vitality of the youthful Coleridge—spawning plans, Southey said, "like a herring"—as a result of cumulative physical agonies and the dragging weight of an unfortunate marriage. Yet even in 1802, a month after the despairing "Dejection: an Ode," Wordsworth described Coleridge as "noisy . . . and gamesome as a boy"; and repeatedly in these letters Coleridge's cheerfulness keeps breaking through the metaphysics in which, as in opium, he sought refuge from his "crazy carcase" and emotional "exsiccation." By 1806 Coleridge's best poetry was behind him, but his achievements in criticism and philosophy were still to come. The index that the editor has included makes these two volumes usable, independently of the correspondence of 1807-1834 that remains to be published.

M. H. ABRAMS

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

### Literary Criticism

THE LITERARY SYMBOL, William Y. Tindall (Columbia, 1955, 278 pp., \$4.50). Professor Tindall of Columbia offers a most satisfactory definition of a literary symbol: "an analogy for something unstated, consist[ing] of an articulation of verbal elements that, going beyond reference and the limits of discourse, embodies and offers a complex of feeling and thought. Not necessarily an image, this analogical embodiment may also be a rhythm, a juxtaposition, an action, a proposition, a structure, or a poem.

One half of this peculiar analogy embodies the other and the symbol is what symbolizes." He then sporadically examines the masters of modern prose and poetry, especially novelists, with an eye to symbolist technique, concluding with Valéry that "a symbolist work has no certain meaning." For original impressions and ranging parallels, this is a rich work, an extending supplement to the author's *Forces in Modern British Literature*, as well as his books on Joyce and Lawrence.

SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF MUSIC: A STUDY OF THE BASIC MUSIC AND ITS PERFORMANCE IS THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION OF SEVEN COMEDIES, John H. Long (Florida, 1955, 213 pp., \$5.50, \$4.75, paper). Shakespeare's use of music and song has received surprisingly little attention from the thousands of scholars and critics who have dealt with his works. Accordingly, limited in scope as it is, this book by Professor Long of Morehead State is a welcome addition to the field of Shakespeare studies. Two introductory chapters assess the use of music and song by other Elizabethan playwrights, and provide a brief historical survey of early music and musical instruments used to accompany songs in the theater. The chapters which follow discuss Shakespeare's use of music and song in *2GV*, *LLL*, *MND*, *MV*, *MAAN*, *AYLI*, and *12N*. A concluding chapter generalizes on the findings of earlier chapters, and is followed by an annotated bibliography and an index. In spite of the confident assurance of the book's title, it is highly doubtful that much is known at all about the "original production" of Shakespeare's plays. An enormous amount of painstaking bibliographical study will be needed before it will be possible to assert anything positively about original performances, and such study is obviously out of the compass of so short a work. But Mr. Long's book should be extremely helpful to students of Shakespeare, and it will be an invaluable aid to producers of the plays who wish to be historically authentic in staging musical episodes. When the original (or near-original) music for Shakespearean songs exists, it is included in the book in a modern transcription; when it is unknown, or no longer extant, Mr. Long has substituted other appropriate music from the time of Shakespeare.

PETER SENG

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

TRAGIC THEMES IN WESTERN LITERATURE, ed. Cleanth Brooks (Yale,

1955, 178 pp., \$2.75). Here seven Yale professors from four different departments give ample evidence of general and special learning in the masterworks of the Western world. These are lectures given in 1952 "to the community at large" on a "perennially interesting topic." Anyone who heard Bernard Knox present his analysis of the mathematical imagery of *Oedipus* was tempted to believe that another lecturer in the series, Chauncey Tinker—one of the most noted of classroom personalities—had indeed (as rumor has) pronounced Knox's the best lecture he had ever heard. Tinker himself on Milton's Sampson, Mack on Hamlet's world, Peyre on *Phèdre*, Sewall on the Karamazovs' world, Reichardt on Isben, and Martz on Shaw's Joan and Eliot's Thomas are fit company.

AN ANATOMY OF MILTON'S VERSE, W. B. C. Watkins (Louisiana State, 151 pp., \$3.00). This modest and affable book, intended for the general reader, is an examination of Milton's poetic craftsmanship. In the first of his three chapters, "Sensation," Watkins examines *Comus*, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes* for the unusually sensuous imagery in which Milton gives form to his ideas. While such analysis almost always bears some fruit, Watkins' harvest is not startling. Ch. II, "Creation," deals with *Paradise Lost* as a poetic embodiment of Milton's concept of the Creation, while attempting to avoid all analysis of Milton's theology. Ch. III, "Temptation," uses the partial failure of *Paradise Regained* to throw light on Milton's achievement in *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*. The major fault of the book is that of proving a point (that Milton's major poems give sensuous form to his ideas) which is overly obvious unless one is willing to explore both technique and content to depths further than Watkins is willing to go in this book.

RALPH W. CONDEE

PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

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## Texts and Anthologies

ROBERT BROWNING: SELECTED POETRY, intro. Horace Gregory (Rinehart, 1956, 286 pp., .65, paper). POEMS OF ROBERT BROWNING, ed. Donald Smalley (Houghton Mifflin, 1956, 543 pp., .95, paper). The undergraduate course in Browning's poetry has had to face a text difficulty inasmuch as the complete works in one volume has such fine print on its double-columned page that students buy the book and do their reading in other editions, and inasmuch as Dean DeVane's excellent *Shorter Poems* does not contain the longer selections most instructors want to use. Of late, publishers have commendably attempted to fill the need by bringing out in paperback editions selections both long and short. Horace Gregory provides his edition with a delightfully written, perceptive essay, containing value judgments provocative enough for discussion. His comments on Ezra Pound and Browning, for example, might well be the springboard for a master's thesis. Donald Smalley, of Indiana, uses his introduction and 64 pages of welcome notes (lacking in Rinehart) to provide the student with solid scholarship, chronology, and bibliography. Riverside provides 88 poems in 472 pages as opposed to Rinehart's 43 poems in 286 pages; both editions find room for three books of *The Ring and the Book*. Professor Smalley's chronological arrangement of the poetry is a good deal more accurate than that of the Rinehart volume, which follows, in a misleading manner, the older Cambridge edition of the complete works. Thus, Rinehart's presentation of eleven poems from *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) seems to be generous and to compare favorably with Riverside's twelve. But upon examination one discovers that nine of the Rinehart eleven are not from *Dramatic Lyrics* at all but from Browning's 1845 and 1855 volumes. The few poems found in the Rinehart but not in the Riverside would not appeal to most teachers for classroom use: they include such poems as "A Face," "A Likeness," "Bad Dreams," and "Inapprehensiveness."

EDWARD C. MCALEER  
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, APOLOGIA PRO VITA SUA, ed. A. Dwight Culler (Houghton Mifflin, 384 pp., \$1.05, paper). This edition of Newman's *Apologia* is most welcome. The work of Professor Culler (Illinois), it offers at a surprisingly modest price a stimulating introduction, a sound, well-printed text, and (for the first time in any edition printed in English), many helpful notes. The Introduction supplies a good account of the contemporary religious background and properly traces Kingsley's ultimate motivation for attacking Newman to hostility to the celibate monasticism which was the Tractarian clerical ideal. Mr. Culler is more than a little simplistic, however, when he makes Kingsley the embodiment of "the masculine principle" and Newman of the feminine, and proceeds to construct a series of equally factitious dichotomies between which he naturally finds it impossible to choose. Of the formal, rhetorical, and stylistic qualities of the *Apologia*, Mr. Culler has nothing to say at all; and the reader is left wondering why he thinks it is a "sublime" book. As for the notes, Mr. Culler has done a good conventional job on names and theological terms, but in the space at his disposal, he cannot come to grips with the deeper problems of the text.

MARTIN J. SVAGLIC  
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY, CHICAGO

A BOOK OF STORIES, ed. Royal A. Gettmann and Bruce Harkness (Rinehart, 1955, 537 pp., \$3). A collection of thirty stories, mostly by twentieth-century writers but including "moderns" like Hawthorne, Melville, and the Great Russians of the previous century. Arranged with an unobtrusive plan, it includes such novelties as the short novels *Noon Wine* and *Billy Budd*, the extracted Grand Inquisitor section from *The Brothers Karamazov*, the analogue with *The Secret Sharer*, and two versions of a story by Frank O'Connor. The Teacher's Manual contains first-rate explications and bibliographies.

THE SHORT STORY, ed. James B. Hall and Joseph Langland (Macmillan, 1956, 485

pp., \$3). A most ranging anthology, arranged in order of increasing complexity from de Voragine and O. Henry up through O'Connor to Mann and Penn Warren, and including writers like Ivanov, Averchenco, and Lovecraft in addition to the most usually anthologized names. Each story has helpful interpretative comment at the end, plus questions that compare and contrast several stories. Bibliography and biographical notes. "We have tried to avoid . . . the extreme orientation to the theories of Henry James—whom we both respect—which has unbalanced a number of recent collections of the story," say the editors, teachers at Oregon and Wyoming.

READING MODERN POETRY, ed. Paul Engle and Warren Carrier (Scott Foresman, 1955, 445 pp., \$2.75). An excellent critical anthology that neither minimizes the difficulties of modern verse nor rides any fashionable hobbies. Engle, the S. U. Iowa poet-professor, and Carrier (Bard) have arranged poems in order of increasing complexity—from Frost to Hopkins, with a closing selection from the Symbolistes, Rilke, and Garcia Lorca. A number of poems are explicated by poet, critic, or editor, and that's about all the apparatus to cope with. The volume is beautifully designed with the binding, printing, and page layout harmonizing to attract the all-important eye.

SOUND AND SENSE: AN INTRODUCTION TO POETRY, Laurence Perrine (Harcourt Brace, 272 pp., \$2.25, paper). A first-rate anthology-text by a teacher at SMU. Perrine leads us along carefully

plotted degrees of instruction, introducing appropriate poems with questions and occasional exercises; sometimes he glosses difficult words and sometimes he asks us to look them up; everything is eminently sensible—except, as with most textbooks of verse, there is little to guarantee response on the part of the average, poesophobic student. The most impressive features are such items as the juxtaposition of an F. P. A. jingle with "Richard Cory" to demonstrate the difference between surprise endings, the chapter of "Bad Poetry and Good," and (for this one is always grateful to a new anthologist) the poems one had not known before.

READINGS FOR THOUGHT AND EX-  
PRESSION, ed. Stewart S. Morgan, John Q. Hays, Fred E. Ekfelt (Macmillan, 1955, 545 pp., \$4). An anthology of articles and essays, mostly recent and mostly on problems that students should be acquainted with, plus head-notes and suggested exercises, compiled by teachers at Texas A&M.

STORIES FROM LITERATURE FOR  
OUR TIME, ed. Harlow O. Waite and Benjamin P. Atkinson (Holt, 1955, 407 pp., \$1.95, paper). Twenty-one stories from a popular period anthology by Waite (Syracuse) and Atkinson (Hobart), issued on analogy with the separate printing of the verse from that book. Biographical notes, an arrangement of sixteen stories from simple to complex, and a pattern of five stories on the theme of coming-of-age constitute the only apparatus.

## Linguistics

THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
DICTIONARY, ed. Woodford A. Heflin (Air University Press, 1956, 578 pp., price not noted). Everyone is aware of the enormous growth of technical terms, but few realize the practical problem they pose. In every specialized organization or industry, communication is becoming increasingly difficult as technical words multiply, and bogs down completely when their meaning is not clear. Standard dictionaries, how-

ever, cannot keep up with or find room for them. Hence special dictionaries, like this one for the Air Force, meet a very real need. In this instance it is particularly gratifying to note that the task of compiling and editing such a work has been entrusted to a well trained and experienced lexicographer.

NORMAN E. ELIASON  
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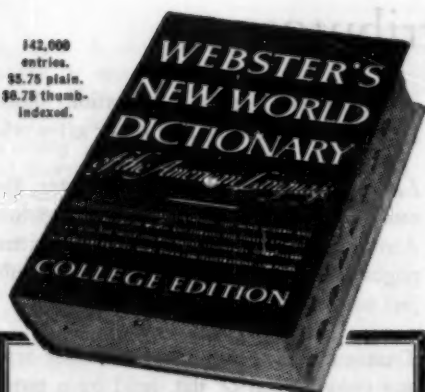
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